The *Christians* CONVERSE with GOD, OR, THE *Insufficiency and Uncertainty* OF Human Friendship And the Improvement of SOLITUDE IN CONVERSE with GOD; With some of the AUTHOR's *Breathings after him.*

By *Richard Baxter.*

Recommended to the Reader's serious thoughts when at the House of Mourning, and in Retirement. By Mr. *Matth. Silvester.*

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TO THE

READER.

THis *Excellent Diſcourſe, breathing the Excellence of it's (now Deceaſed) Authors Spirit, craves thy moſt ſerious peruſal; and it will plentifully reward the hours which ſhall be ſpent thereon. It greatly ſavours of deep thoughts, ſtrict obſervations, and long and great experience of God, of Things, and Perſons. Creatures look beſt when*

at a distance, and in prospect; but when nearer to us, they are then easily looked through, and seldom found to correspond with their Appearances to us, and with our expectations from them. But God is such a deep and boundless Abyss of Perfection, as most delightfully will endure and recompence all the severity and closeness of our eternal Thoughts about him. Perfected Spirits are all thought concerning God, and find their Hearts enflamed, and all their Powers invigorated thereby eternally, to inexpressible Satisfaction: And what varieties of pleasant Thoughts the Innumerable Instances and Mirrours of Divine Excellencies in the Heavens

vens will endlesly Minister unto, I do not know, nor dare I guess too boldly at them. But how those Souls can look for Heaven, or truly be accounted gracious, who never retire solemnly to converse with God, I know not. Surely, where God is not more than all to us, he can be comfortably nothing: And our religious Exercises and Pretences must needs be mean and dull, whilst God is triflingly and seldom thought on, and conversed with by us. Can holy Walking be preserved and promoted without love? Can love to God and Christ, and to the invisible State, be kindled, cherished, and continually advanced without Faith? Can Faith be any thing but Fancy and Pre-

ſumption, without Thought and Knowledge? And can the Life of Faith, Hope, Love, and holy Walking, be fixt and vigorous, and proficient, without our ſerious and frequent repreſentations of God unto our ſelves by ſolemn Contemplations of his excellent Perfections, free Communications, plentiful Proviſions, and glorious Deſigns, whereto he hath entitled us, ſeeing our Religion and Devotions in all the parts thereof can have no Life and Soul but this? What is it to converſe with God in Solitude, but to actuate our Thoughts of what we know concerning God in Chriſt, and to accomodate them to all the needful

ful and useful Purposes of Religion and Devotion; and to make Thoughts solemnly serviceable to the great Ends thereof, viz. our due and seasonable Representations of our God to us, and of our selves to him in Christ, pursuant to the stated and occasional Ends and Interests of Christian Godliness, as the matter may require? Conversing thus with God, wants not its great Advantages in life and death. And if these Thoughts contained in this Book, (which did so greatly reconcile the Author to the Thoughts of his then approaching, but now experienced Death,) were more in Exercise at Funeral

Funeral Solemnities, and this Book then put into the hands of Mourners, it would be no matter of Repentance that I know of. These are the hasty Thoughts and Sentiments of thine in and for the Lord, whilst

Matthew Sylvester.

London, Sept. 12.
1692.

THE

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OF CONVERSING WITH God, &c.

Joh. XVI. 32.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea is come, that ye shall be scattered every Man to his own, and shall leave me alone: And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

I Am this day to handle the instance of [*Christ's being forsaken by his Friends and Followers.*] He thought meet to *foretell* them, how they should manifest their infirmity and

untruſtineſs in this temporary forſaking of him, that ſo he might fullyer convince them, that he knew what was in Man, and that he knew future contingencies (or things to come, which ſeem moſt dependent on the Will of Man) and that he voluntarily ſubmitted to his deſerted State, and expected no ſupport from Creatures, but that *Man* ſhould then do *leaſt for Chriſt*, when *Chriſt* was doing *moſt for Man*; that *Man* by an unthankful *forſaking Chriſt*, ſhould then manifeſt his *forſaken* deplorate ſtate, when Chriſt was to make Atonement for his Reconciliation to God, and was preparing the moſt coſtly Remedy for his Recovery. He *foretold* them of the Fruit which their Infirmity would produce, to humble them that were apt to think too highly of themſelves for the late free Confeſſion they had made of Chriſt, when they had newly ſaid [*Now we are ſure that thou knoweſt all things: by this we are ſure, that thou comeſt forth from God*, ver. 30.

He anſwereth them [*Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh*, &c.] Not that Chriſt would not have his Servants know his graces in them, but he would alſo

also have them know the *Corruption* that *is* latent, and the infirmity consistent with their grace. We are very apt to judge of all that *is in us*, and of all that we *shall do* hereafter, by what we *feel at the present* upon our hearts. As when we *feel* the stirring of some *Corruption*, we are apt to think that there is *nothing else*, and hardly perceive the contrary grace, and are apt to think it will never be better with us; So when we *feel* the Exercise of *Faith*, *Desire* or *Love*, we are apt to overlook the contrary *Corruptions*, and to think that we shall never feel them more. But Christ would keep us both humble and vigilant, by acquainting us with the mutability and unconstancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget that the time is coming when it may go worse. As Christ said to his Disciples, here in the case of *Believing*, we may say to our selves in that and other cases: *Do we now Believe?* It is well: But the time may be coming in which we may be brought to shake with the stirrings of our remaining Unbelief, and shrewdly tempted to question the truth of Christianity it self, and of the Holy Scrip-

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tures, and of the Life to come. *Do we now rejoyce* in the perſuaſions of the Love of God? The time may be coming when we may think our ſelves forſaken and undone, and think he will eſteem and uſe us as his Enemies. *Do we now pray with fervour*, and pour out our Souls enlargedly to God? It is well: But the time may be coming when we ſhall ſeem to be as dumb and prayerleſs, and ſay, we cannot pray, or elſe we find no audience and acceptance of our Prayers. Chriſt knoweth that in ſins which we little know by our ſelves, and therefore may *foreknow*, that we will commit ſuch Sins, or fall into ſuch Dangers, as we little *fear*.

What Chriſt here propheſieth to them did afterwards all come to paſs. As ſoon as ever Danger and Trouble did appear, they began to flag, and to ſhew how ill they could adhere unto him or ſuffer with him, without his ſpecial corroborating Grace. In the Garden when he was ſweating Blood in Prayer, they were ſleeping; Though the Spirit was willing, the Fleſh was weak. They could not *watch with him one hour*, Mat. 26. 40, 43. When he was apprehend-

ed,

ed, they shifted each Man for himself, *Mat.* 26. 56. [*Then all the Disciples forsook him and fled.* And as this is said to be *that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*, Mat. 26. 54, 56. so it *might* be said to be, That *this prediction of Christ himself might be fulfilled.* Not that Scripture Prophesies did *cause the Sin* by which they were fulfilled, nor that God caused the sin to fulfill his own Predictions, but that God cannot be deceived who foretold in Scriptures long before, that thus it would come to pass: When it is said, That [*what it must be, that the Scripture may be fulfilled*] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] *Necessity* [illegible] *ascendi & decendi* [illegible] *cessity In ordine* [illegible] of the *Thing it self* [illegible] Prediction or Decree [illegible] of the *Truth* of this [illegible] *Ings*, [*such a thing* [illegible] *hath decreed, foreknown* [illegible]

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or [*whatever God foretelleth, muſt neceſſarily come* to paſs, that is, *will certainly* come to paſs: *but this God hath foretold; therefore this will come to paſs.*]

Here are three obſervable points in the Text, that are worthy our diſtinct Conſideration, though for brevity ſake I ſhall handle them together.

1. *That Chriſt was forſaken by his own Diſciples, and left alone.*

2. *When the Diſciples left Chriſt, they were ſcattered every one to his own.* They returned to their old Habitations, and old Acquaintance, and old Employment, as if their hopes and hearts had been almoſt *broken*, and they had loſt all their labour in following Chriſt ſo long: Yet the root of Faith and Love that ſtill remained, cauſed them to enquire further of the end, and to come together in ſecret to confer about theſe Matters.

3. *When Chriſt was forſaken of his Diſciples, and left alone, yet was he not forſaken of his Father, nor left ſo alone as to be ſeparated from him or his love.*

We are now to conſider of this, not only as a *part of Chriſts Humiliation*, but alſo as a *Point* in which *we muſt expect to be conformed to him.* It may poſſibly

possibly seem strange to us, that Christ would suffer *all his Disciples* to *forsake* him in his Extremity; and I doubt it will seem strange *to us*, when in our *extremity*, and our suffering for Christ (and perhaps *for them*) we shall find our selves forsaken by those that we most highly valued, and had the greatest familiarity with. But there are many Reasons of this permissive Providence open to our observation.

1. No wonder, if when Christ was suffering *for Sin*, he would even then permit the Power and odiousness of sin to break forth, that it might be known he suffered *not in vain*. No wonder, if he permitted his Followers to desert him, and to shew the latent Unbelief and Selfishness, and unthankfulness that remained in them, that so they might know, that the death of Christ was as necessary for them as for others; and the *universality* of the *Disease* might shew the need that the *Remedy* should be *Universal*. And it is none of Christs intent to make his Servants to seem better than they are, to themselves or others, or to honour himself by the hiding of their Faults, but to magnifie his par-

doning and healing grace, by the means or occaſion of the ſins which he pardoneth and healeth.

2. Hereby he will bring his Followers to the fuller knowledge of themſelves, and ſhew them that which all their days ſhould keep them humble, and watchful, and ſave them from preſumption and truſting in themſelves: When we have made any full Confeſſion of Chriſt, or done him any conſiderable ſervice, we are apt to ſay with the Diſciples, *Mat.* 19. 27. *Behold, we have forſaken all, and followed thee; what ſhall we have?* As if they had rather

gainst the miserable world, [illegible]
made [illegible] to [illegible]
received all that [illegible]
tel the common sort: [illegible]
hurt us and shamed us, we [illegible]
whom we must be beholden to [illegible]

4. Christ would permit his [illegible]
thus far to forsake him, [illegible]
have no *support from man*, [illegible]
for man: This was part of his [illegible]
humiliation, to be deprived of [illegible]
comforts, and to bear [illegible]
those sore, that but lately [illegible]
ful servants, that [illegible]
and *sinners*, while he [illegible]
and as a *Sacrifice*, [illegible]
to himself the honour of [illegible]
the Redemption of the [illegible]
as by [illegible]

5. Christ did [illegible]
courage of his Disciples [illegible]
that their witness to [illegible]
greater credit and authority [illegible]
actual Resurrection and [illegible]
tion of the Spirit [illegible]
believe [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

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gainst the miserable world, as if they had made themselves to differ, and had not received all that grace by which they excel the common sort: when our falls have hurt us and shamed us, we shall know to whom we must be beholden to support us.

4. Christ would permit his Disciples thus far to forsake him, because he would have no *support from man*, in his *sufferings for man*: This was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from those few, that but lately were his faithful servants: that *men* dealing like *men*, and *sinners*, while he was doing like *God*, and as a *Saviour*, no man might challenge to himself the honour of contributing to the Redemption of the world, so much as by encouraging the Redeemer.

5. Christ did permit the Faith and courage of his Disciples thus far to fail, that their witness to him might be of the greater credit and authority, when his actual Resurrection and the Communication of the Spirit should compel them to believe; when all their doubts were dissipated, they that had doubted themselves, and yet were constrained to believe, would be received as the most unsuspected

witneſſes by the doubting world.

6. Laſtly, by the deſertion and diſſipation of his Diſciples, Chriſt would teach us whenever we are called to follow him in ſuffering, what to expect from the beſt of men; Even to know that of themſelves they are untruſty, and may fail us: and therefore not to look for too much aſſiſtance or encouragement from them. *Paul* lived in a time when Chriſtians were more ſelf-denying and ſtedfaſt than they are now: And *Paul* was one that might better expect to be faithfully accompanied in his ſufferings for Chriſt, than any of us: And yet he ſaith, 2 *Tim.* 4. 16. [*At my firſt anſwer no man ſtood with me, but all men forſook me:*] and prayeth, that it be not laid to their charge: Thus you have ſeen ſome Reaſons why Chriſt conſented to be left of all, and permitted his Diſciples to deſert him in his ſufferings.

Yet note here, that it is but a partial temporary *forſaking* that Chriſt permitteth; and not a total or final forſaking or Apoſtaſie. Though he will let them ſee that they are *yet men*, yet will he not have them to be but *as other men*: Nor will he quite caſt them off, or ſuffer them to periſh.

Nor

Nor is it all alike that thus forsake him; *Peter* doth not do as *Judas*: The *sincere* may manifest their *infirmity*; but the *Hypocrites* will manifest their *Hypocrisie*.

And accordingly in *our sufferings* our familiars that were half-hearted (as being worldlings and carnal at the heart) may perhaps *betray* us, and *set against us*, or *forsake the cause of Christ*, and follow the way of gain and honour: when our tempted shrinking friends that yet may have some sincerity, may perhaps *look strange* at us, and seem *not* to *know us*, and may hide their heads, and shew their fears; and perhaps also begin to study some self-deceiving arguments and distinctions, and to stretch their consciences, and venture on some sin, because they are afraid to venture on affliction; till Christ shall cast a gracious rebuking quickning aspect on them, and shame them for their sinful shame, & fear them from their sinful fears, and inflame their Love to him by the motions of his Love to them, and destroy the Love that turned them for him: And then the same men that dishonourably failed Christ and us, and began to shrink, will turn back and re-assume their arms, and

and by patient suffering overcome, and win the Crown as we have done before them.

Use. CHristians, expect to be conformed to your Lord in *this part* of his Humiliation also: Are your friends yet fast and friendly to you? For all that expect that *many* of them at least should prove less friendly: and promise not your selves an unchanged constancy in them: Are they yet *useful* to you? expect the time when they cannot help you: Are they your comforters and delight, and is their company much of your solace upon earth? Be ready for the time when they *may* become your sharpest scourges, and most heart-pencing griefs, or at least whom you shall say, We have no pleasure in them. Have any of them, or all, already failed you? what wonder? Are they not men, and sinners? To whom were they ever so constant as not to fail them? Rebuke your selves for your unwarrantable expectations from them. And learn hereafter to know what man is, and expect that friends should use you as followeth.

1. Some

Some of them that you thought *sincere*, shall prove perhaps *unfaithful* and *dissemblers*, and upon *fallings out*, or matters of *self-interest* may seek your ruine. Are you better than *David* that had an *Achitophel*? or than *Paul* that had a *Demas*? or than Christ that had a *Judas*? Some will *forsake God*: what wonder then if they forsake you? *Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold*, Mat. 24. 12. Where pride and vain glory, and sensuality and worldliness are unmortified at the heart, there is no trustiness in such persons: For their wealth, or honour, or fleshly interest, they will part with God and their Salvation; much more with their best deserving friends. Why may not you as well as *Job* have occasion to complain, [*He hath put my Brethren far from me, and my Acquaintance are very estranged from me: My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar Friends have forgotten me: They that dwell in my House, and my Maiden count me for a Strange: I am in Alien in their sight: I called my Servant, and he gave me no Answer: I intreated him with my mouth: My breath is strange to my Wife, though I intreated for the*

Children

Childrens ſake of my own Body? Yea, young Children diſpiſed me: I aroſe, and they ſpake againſt me: All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned againſt me, Job 19. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. Why may not you as well as *David* be put to ſay, *Yea mine own familiar Friend in whom I truſted, which did eat of my Bread, hath liſt up his Heel againſt me!*] Pſal. 41. 9. Thoſe that have been moſt acquainted with the ſecrets of your Soul, and privy to your very thoughts, may be the perſons that ſhall betray you, or grow ſtrange to you. Thoſe that you have moſt obliged by benefits, may prove your greateſt Enemies. You may find ſome of your Friends like Birds of prey, that hover about you for what they can get, and when they have catcht it, fly away. If you have given them all that you have, they will forſake you, and perhaps reproach you, becauſe you have no more to give them. They are your Friends more for what they *yet expect* from you, than for what they have already received. If you cannot ſtill be helpful to them, or feed their covetous deſires, or ſupply their wants, you are

to

to them but as one that they had never known. Many a faithful Miniſter of Chriſt hath ſtudied, and preacht, and prayed, and wept for their Peoples Souls, and after all have been taken for their Enemies, and uſed as ſuch; yea even *becauſe* they have *done ſo much* for them. Like the Patient, that being cured of a mortal ſickneſs, ſued his Phyſician at Law for making him ſick with the Phyſick (But it is indeed *our uncured* Patients only that are offended with us.) *Paul* was accounted an Enemy to the *Galathians*, becauſe he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth maketh the faithfulleſt Preachers moſt ungrateful. It muſt ſeem no wonder to a Preacher of the Goſpel, when he hath entreated, prayed, and wept night and day for miſerable Souls, and laid his hands as it were under their feet in hopes of their Converſion and Salvation, to find them after all, his bitter Enemies, and ſeeking his Deſtruction, that could have laid down his Life for their Salvation. *Jeremy* ſeemed too impatient under this affliction, when he ſaid [*Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the Voice of them that contend with me: Shall Evil be recompenſed*

compensed for good. Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy Wrath from them. Therefore deliver up their Children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the Sword, &c. Jer. 18. 19, 20.

Thus may Ingratitude afflict you, and kindness be requited with unkindness, and the greatest benefits be forgotten, and requited with the greatest wrongs: Your old Familiars may be your Foes, and you may be put to say as *Jeremy*, *For I heard the defaming of many, Fear on every side: Report, say they, and we will report it: All my Familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.* Jer. 20. 10. Thus must the Servants of Christ be used, in conformity to their suffering Head.

2. And some that are sincere, and whose hearts are with you, may yet be drawn by temptation to *defame* you. When malice is slandering you, true friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to justifie you or take your part. When a Peter in such imbecility and fear will disown and deny his Lord.

ing Lord, what wonder if faint hearted friends disown you, or me, that may give them too much occasion or pretence? Why may not you and I be put to say as *David* did, *Psal.* 38. 11, 12. [*My lovers and my Friends stand aloof from my sore, and my Kinsmen stand afar off: They that seek after my Life lay Snares for me: And they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.*] They that in fearfulness will fail their *Maker and Redeemer*, and hazard their *Salvation*, may by a smaller temptation be drawn to fail such *friends* as we

Moreover, a hundred things

one another; how apt are we to *take unkindneſſes* at one another, and to be *ſuſpicious* of our Friends, or *offended* with them? And how apt to give *occaſion* of ſuch offence? How apt are we to cenſure one another, and to miſinterpret the words and actions of our Friend? And how apt to give occaſion of ſuch miſtakes and cutting cenſures? And the more kindneſs we have found in, or expected from our Friends, the more their real or ſuppoſed injuries will affect us. We are apt to ſay, [*Had it been a ſtranger, I could have born it: But to be uſed thus by my boſom or familiar Friend, goes near my heart.*] And indeed the unkindneſs of Friends is no ſmall affliction: the ſuffering going uſually as near the Heart, as the perſon that cauſed it was near it. Eſpecially when our own weakneſs cauſeth us to forget the frailty and infirmities of Man, and with what allowances and expectations we muſt chooſe and uſe our Friends; and when we forget the Love that remaineth in the midſt of paſſions.

4. Alſo *croſs Intereſts* and unſuitableneſs may exceedingly interrupt the faſteſt friendſhip. *Friendſhip* is very much found-

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ed in *ſuitableneſs*, and maintained by it: And among mortals, there is no perfect ſuitableneſs to be found; but much unſuitableneſs ſtill remaineth. That which pleaſeth one, is diſpleaſing to another: One liketh this place, and the other that: One liketh this habit, and the other that: One is for mirth, and the other for ſadneſs: One for talk, and the other for ſilence: One for a publick, and the other for a private life. And their perſonallity or individuation having ſelf-love as inſeparable, will unavoidably cauſe a contrariety of intereſts. The Creature is inſufficient for us: If one have it, perhaps the other muſt want it: Like a covering too narrow for the bed. Sometimes our reputations ſeem to ſtand at a ſtay, ſo that one mans is diminiſhed by anothers: and then how apt is envy to create a grudge, and raiſe unfriendly jealouſies and diſtaſtes. Sometimes the Commodity of one is the diſcommodity of the other: And then [*Mine and Thine*] (which are contrary to the community of friendſhip) may divide and alienate, and make two of thoſe that ſeemed one. The inſtances of *Abraham* and *Lot* (upon the difference among their Servants) and of *Iſaac* and

and *Iſhmael*, and of *Jacob* and *Eſau*, and of *Laban* and *Jacob*, and of *Leah* and *Rachel*, and of *Joſeph* and his Brethren, and of *Saul* and *David*, and of *Ziba Mephibosheth* and *David*, with many others tell us this. It is rare to meet with a *jonathan*, that will endearedly love that man to the death, who is appointed to deprive him of a Kingdom. If one can but ſay [*I ſuffer by him, or I am a looſer by him*] it ſeemeth enough to excuſe unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratifie the deſires of all the covetous, ambitious, ſelf-ſeeking perſons in the World, or elſe cure their diſeaſes, and poſſeſs their minds with perfect Charity, [illegible]

[illegible] hath over and over again given [illegible] full and full demonſtrations of the [illegible] of *Chriſt opinions*, to alienate friends and make diviſions, as moſt ages of the World have ever had. If your Friend be *proud*, it's wonderful how he will diſdain you; and withdraw his Love, if you be not of his *mind*. If he be *zealous*, he is eaſily tempted, to think it a part of his

[illegible] duty

duty to God, to disown you if you differ from him, as taking you for one that disowneth the truth of God and therefore one that God himself disowneth; or at least to grow *cold* in his affection toward you, and to decline from you, as he that thinks you do from God. As agreement in opinions doth strangely reconcile Affections; so disagreement doth secretly and strangely alienate them: even before you are well aware, your friend hath lost possession of your hearts, because of an unavoidable diversity of apprehensions: When all your Friends have the same intellectual complexion and temperature, and measure of understanding with your selves, then you may have hope to escape the ruptures, which unlikeliness and differences of apprehensions might else cause.

6. Moreover, some of your friends may so far *overgrow* you in *wisdom*, or *wealth*, or *honour*, or *earth*, in their own conceits, that they may begin to take you to be unsuitable for them, and unmeet for their further special friendship. Alas poor man, they will pity thee that thou art no wiser, and that thou hast no greater light to change thy mind as fast as they,

they, or that thou art ſo weak and ignorant as not to ſee what ſeems to them ſo clear a truth; or that thou art ſo ſimple to caſt away thy ſelf by croſſing them that might prefer thee, or to fall under the diſpleaſure of thoſe that have power to raiſe or ruine thee: But if thou *be* ſo *ſimple*, thou mayeſt be the object of their *lamentation*, but art no *familiar friend* for them. They think it fitteſt to cloſe and converſe with thoſe of their own *rank* and *ſtature*, and not with ſuch *ſhrubs* and *children*, that may prove their trouble and diſhonour.

7. And ſome of your friends will think that by a more *through acquaintance* with you, they have found out more of your *infirmities* or *faults*, and therefore have found that you are *leſs aimable* and *valuable* than at firſt they judged you: They will think that by diſtance, unacquaintedneſs, and an overhaſty love and judgment, they were miſtaken in you; and that now they ſee reaſon to *repent* of the love which they think was guilty of ſome *errors* and *exceſs*: when they come nearer you, and have had more tryal of you, they will think they are fitter to judge of you than before:

before: And indeed our defects are so many, and all our infirmities so great, that the more men know us, the more they may see in us that deserveth pity or reproof; and as Pictures, we appear less beautiful at the neareſt view: Though this will not warrant the withdrawing of that Love which is due to friends, and to vertue even in the imperfect: nor will excuse that alienation and decay of friendship that is caused by the pride of such as overlook, perhaps much greater failings and weaknesses in themselves, which need forgiveness.

8. And perhaps *some* of your Friends will *grow weary* of their Friendship, having that infirmity of humane nature, not to be much pleased with one thing long. Their love is a flower that quickly withereth: It is a short liv'd thing that soon groweth old. It must be *novelty* that must feed their love and their delight.

9. And perhaps they may have got some better *Friends* in their apprehensions, that may have so much interest as to take them up, and leave no room for antient Friends. It may be they have met with those that are *more suitable*, or

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can be *more uſeful* to them: that have *more learning*, or wit, or *wealth*, or *power*, than *you* have, and therefore ſeem more worthy of their Friendſhip.

10. And ſome of them may think when you are in a *low* and *ſuffering ſtate*, and in *danger* of *worſe*, that it is part of their *duty of ſelf-preſervation* to be ſtrange to you (though in heart they wiſh you well.) They will think they are *not bound* to hazard themſelves upon the diſpleaſure of ſuperiours, to own or befriend you or any other: Though they muſt not deſert Chriſt, they think they may deſert a *man* for their own preſervation.

To avoid both extreams in ſuch a caſe, men muſt both ſtudy to underſtand which way is moſt ſerviceable to Chriſt, and to his Church, and withal to be able to deny themſelves, and alſo muſt ſtudy to underſtand what Chriſt meaneth in his final ſentence [*In as much as you did it (or did it not) to one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, you did it (or did it not) to me.*] As if it were to viſit the *Contagious*, we muſt neither caſt away our lives to *do no good*, or for that which in *value* holdeth no proportion with them; nor yet muſt we deny to run any hazard when it is *in-*

deed

deed our duty: So is it in our visiting those that suffer for the cause of Christ: (but that here the *owning them* being the *confessing of him*, we need more seldom to fear being too forward.)

11. And some of your friends may cover their faithfulness with the pretence of *some fault* that you have been guilty of, some *errour* that you hold, or some *unhansom* or *culpable* act that you have done, or some *duty* that you have *left undone* or *failed* in. For they think there is not a better shelter for their *unfaithfulness*, then to pretend for it the *Name* and *Cause of God*, and so to make a *duty* of their *sin*. Who would not justifie them, if they can but prove, that *God requireth them*, and *Religion* obligeth them to forsake you for your faults? There are few crimes in the world that by some are not fathered on God (that most hateth them) as thinking no name can so much honour them. False friends therefore use this means as well as other Hypocrites: And though *God is Love*, and condemneth nothing more than *uncharitableness* & *malice*, yet *these* are commonly by falsharted Hypocrites, called by pious vertuous names, and God himself is entitled to them: so

that few worldlings, ambitious perſons or timeſervers, but will confidently pretend Religion for all their falſhood to their friends, or bloody cruelty to the ſervants of Chriſt, that comply not with their carnal intereſt.

12. Perhaps ſome of your friends may *really miſtake your caſe*, and think that you ſuffer as *evil doers*, and inſtead of *comforting* you, may be your *ſharpeſt cenſurers*: This is one of the moſt notable things ſet out to our obſervation in the book of *Job*: It was not the ſmalleſt part of his affliction, that when the hand of God was heavy upon him, and then if ever was the time for his friends to have been his comforters, and friends indeed, on the contrary *they* became his *ſcourge*, and by *unjuſt accuſations*, and *miſinterpretations* of the providence of God, did greatly add to his affliction! when God had taken away his children, wealth and health, his friends would take away the reputation and comfort of his integrity; and under pretence of bringing him to repentance, did charge him with that which he was never guilty of; *They* wounded his *good name*, and would have wounded his *conſcience*, and deprived him of his inward

ward peace: Cenſorious falſe accuſing friends do cut deeper then malicious ſlandring enemies. It is no wonder if *ſtrangers* or *enemies* do misjudge and misreport our actions: But when your *boſom friends*, that ſhould moſt intimately know you, and be the cheif witneſs of your innocency againſt all others, ſhall in their jealouſie, or envy, or peeviſhneſs, or falling out, be your chief reproachers and unjuſt accuſers, as it makes it ſerve more credible to others, ſo it will come neareſt to your ſelves. And yet this is a thing that muſt be expected: yea even your moſt ſelf-denying acts of obedience to God, may be ſo miſunderſtood by godly men, and real friends, as by them to be taken for your great miſcarraige, and turned to your rebuke: As *Davids* dancing before the Ark was by his wife; which yet did but make him reſolve to be yet more vile: If you be caſt into poverty, or diſgrace, or priſon, or baniſhment, for your neceſſary obedience to Chriſt, perhaps your friend or wife may become your accuſer for this greateſt ſervice, and ſay, This is your own doing: your raſhneſs, or indiſcretion, or ſelf-conceitedneſs, or willfulneſs hath brought it upon you: what

need had you to ſay ſuch words, or to do this or that? why could not you have yeilded in ſo ſmall a matter?] Perhaps your *coſtlieſt* and *moſt excellent obedience* ſhall by your *neareſt friends* be called the fruits of *pride*, or *humour*, or *paſſion*, or ſome corrupt affection, or at leaſt of *folly* and *inconſiderateneſs*. When fleſh and blood hath long been ſtriving *in you* againſt your duty, and ſaying, [Do not caſt away thy ſelf: O ſerve not God at ſo dear a rate: God doth not require thee to undo thy ſelf: why ſhouldeſt thou not avoid ſo great inconveniences?] When with much ado you have conquered all your carnal reaſonings, and denyed your ſelves and your carnal intereſt; you muſt expect even from ſome religious friends, to be accuſed for theſe very actions, and perhaps their accuſations may faſten ſuch a blot upon your names, as ſhall never be waſhed out till the day of judgment. By difference of intereſts, or apprehenſions, and by unacquaintedneſs with your hearts, and actions, the righteouſneſs of of the righteous may be thus taking from him, and friends may do the work of enemies, yea of Satan himſelf the accuſer of the brethren; and may prove as thorns in

in your bed, and gravel in your ſhoes, yea in your eyes, and wrong you much more than open adverſaries could have done. How is it like to go with that *mans reputation*, you may eaſily judge, whoſe *friends* are like *Jobs*, and his *enemies* like *Davids*, that lay ſnares before him, and diligently watch for matter of reproach: yet this may befall the *beſt of men.*

13. You may be permitted by God to fall into ſome *real crime*, and then your friends may poſſibly think it is their *duty* to diſown you, ſo far as you have wronged God: When you provoke *God* to frown upon you, he may cauſe your *friends* to frown upon you: If you fall out with him, and grow ſtrange to him, no marvel if your trueſt friends fall out with you, and grow ſtrange to you. They love you for your godlineſs, and for the ſake of Chriſt; and therefore *muſt* abate their love if you abate your godlineſs; and muſt for the ſake of Chriſt be diſpleaſed with you for your ſins. And if in ſuch a caſe of real guilt, you ſhould be diſpleaſed at their diſpleaſure, and ſhould expect that your friend ſhould befriend your ſin, or carry himſelf towards you in your guilt

as if you were innocent, you will but ſhew that you underſtand not the nature of true friendſhip, nor the uſe of a true friend; and are yet your ſelves too friendly to your ſins.

14. Moreover, thoſe few friends that are trueſt to you, may be utterly unable to relieve you in your diſtreſs, or to give you eaſe, or do you any good. The eaſe may be ſuch that they can but pity you and lament your ſorrows, and weep over you: you may ſee in them that man is not as God, whoſe friendſhip can accompliſh all the good that he deſireth to his friends. The wiſeſt and greateſt and beſt of men are ſilly comforters, and uneffectual helps: you may be ſick, and pained, and grieved, and diſtreſſed, notwithſtanding any thing that they can do for you: Nay, perhaps in their ingnorance, they may increaſe your miſery, while they deſire your relief; and by ſtriving indirectly to help and eaſe you, may tye the knot faſter and make you worſe. They may provoke thoſe more againſt you that oppreſs you, while they think they ſpeak that which would tend to ſet you free: They may think to *eaſe* your troubled minds by ſuch words as ſhall in-

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creaſe the trouble: or to deliver you as *Peter* would have delivered Chriſt, and ſaved his Saviour, firſt by *carnal counſel*, Math. 16. 22. [*Be it far from thee Lord, this ſhall not be unto thee*] And then by *carnal unjuſt force*, (by drawing his ſword againſt the Officers.) *Love and good meaning* will not prevent the miſchiefs of ignorance and miſtake. If your friend cut your throat while he thought to cut but a vein to cure your diſeaſe, it is not his *friendly meaning* that will ſave your lives. Many a thouſand ſick people are *killed* by their *friends*, that attend them with an earneſt deſire of their life; while they ignorantly give them that which is contrary to their diſeaſe, and will not be the leſs pernicious for the good meaning of the giver. Who have more tender affections than Mothers to their children? And yet a great part of the calamity of the World of ſickneſs, and the miſery of mans life, proceedeth from the ignorant and erroneous indulgence of Mothers to their Children, who to pleaſe them, let them eat and drink what they will, and uſe them to exceſs and gluttony in their childhood, till nature be abuſed and mattered and clogged with thoſe ſuperfluities

ties and crudities, which are the dunghill matter of moſt of the following diſeaſes of their lives.

I might here alſo remember you how your friends may themſelves be overcome with a temptation, and then become the more dangerous tempters of you, by how much the greater their intereſt is in your affections. If they be infected with *error*, they are the likeſt perſons to enſnare you: If they be tainted with *Covetouſneſs* or *Pride*, there is none ſo likely to draw you to the ſame ſin: And ſo your *friends* may be in *effect* your moſt deadly *Enemies*, deceivers and deſtroyers.

15. And if you have *friends* that are never ſo *firm* and *conſtant*, they may prove (not only unable to relieve you) but very increaſing to your grief. If they are afflicted in the participation of your *ſufferings*, as *your troubles* are become *theirs* (without your eaſe) ſo *their trouble for you* will become *yours*, and ſo your ſtock of ſorrow will be encreaſed And they are mortals, and liable to diſtreſs as well as you. And therefore they are like to bear their ſhare in ſeveral ſorts of ſufferings: And ſo friendſhip will make their ſufferings to be yours: Their ſickneſſes and

and pains, their fears and griefs, their wants and dangers will all be yours. And the *more* they are your *hearty Friends*, the more they will be *yours*. And ſo you will have as many additions to the proper burden of your griefs, as you have ſuffering Friends: When you do but hear that they are dead, you ſay as *Thomas*, Joh. 11. 16. [*Let us alſo go that we may die with him.*] And having *many* ſuch friends you will almoſt always have one or other of them in diſtreſs; and ſo be ſeldom free from ſorrow; beſides all that which is properly your own.

16. Laſtly, if you have a Friend that is both true and uſeful, yet you may be ſure he muſt ſtay with you but a little while. *The godly men will ceaſe, and the faithful fail from among the Children of men; while men of lying flattering lips, and double hearts ſurvive, and the wicked walk on every ſide while the vileſt men are exalted*, Pſal. 12. 1, 2, 8. while ſwarms of falſe malicious men, are left round about you, perhaps God will take away your *deareſt Friends*: If among a multitude of unfaithful ones, you have but *one* that is your *friend indeed*, perhaps

God will take away that one. He may be *ſeparated* from you into *another Country*; or taken away to God by Death. Not that God doth grudge you the mercy of a faithful Friend; but that he would be your *All*, and would not have you hurt your ſelves with too much affection to any Creature, and for other reaſons to be named anon.

And to be forſaken of your Friends, is not all your affliction; but to be ſo forſaken is a great aggravation of it. 1. For they uſe to forſake us in our greateſt ſufferings and ſtreights, when we have the *greateſt need* of them.

2. They fail us moſt at a *dying hour*, when all other worldly comfort faileth: As we muſt leave our houſes, lands and wealth, ſo muſt we for the preſent leave our Friends: And as all the reſt are filly comforters, when we have once received our citation to appear before the Lord, ſo alſo are our Friends but filly Comforters: They can weep over us, but they cannot with all their care, delay the ſeparating ſtroak of death, one day or hour.

Only by their prayers, and holy advice, remembring us of everlaſting things, and provoking

provoking us in the work of preparation, they may prove to us friends indeed. And therefore we muſt value a holy, heavenly, faithful friend, as one of the greateſt Treaſures upon Earth. And while we take notice how *as men* they may forſake us, we muſt not deny but that *as Saints* they are precious, and of ſingular uſe to us; and Chriſt uſeth *by them* to communicate his mercies; and if any Creatures in the World may be bleſſings to us, it is *holy perſons*, that have moſt of God in their hearts and lives.

3. And it is an aggravation of the Croſs, that they often fail us, when we *are moſt faithful in our Duty*, and ſtumble moſt upon the moſt excellent acts of our *obedience*.

4. And thoſe are the perſons that oft-times fail us, of whom we have *deſerved* beſt, and from whom we might have *expected moſt*.

Review the experiences of the choiceſt Servants that Chriſt hath had in the World, and you ſhall find enough to confirm you of the vanity of man, and the inſtability of the deareſt Friends. How highly was *Athanaſius* eſteemed? and yet at laſt deſerted and baniſhed even by the

the famous *Conſtantine* himſelf! How excellent a Man was *Gregory Nazianzene*, and highly valued in the Church? and yet by reproach and diſcouragements driven away from his Church at *Conſtantinople* whither he was choſen: and envyed by the Biſhops round about him. How worthy a man was the eloquent *Chryſoſtom*, and highly valued in the Church! And yet how bitterly was he proſecuted by *Hierome* and *Epiphanius*; and baniſhed, and dyed in a ſecond baniſhment, by the provocation of Factious contentious Biſhops, and an Empreſs impatient of his plain reproofs? What perſon more generally eſteemed and honoured for learning, piety and peaceableneſs then *Melanchthon*? and yet by the Contentions of *Illyricus* and his party, he was made aweary of his life. As highly as *Calvin* was (deſervedly) valued at *Geneva*, yet once in a popular lunacy and diſpleaſure, they drove him out of their City, and in contempt of him ſome called their Dogs by the name of *Calvin*; (though after they were glad to intreat him to return.) How much our *Grindal* and *Abbot* were eſteemed, it appeareth by their advancement to the Archbiſhop-

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rick of *Canterbury*: And yet who knoweth not that their eminent piety ſufficed not to keep them from dejecting frowns! And if you ſay, that it is no wonder if with *Princes* through *intereſt*, and with *People* through levity, it be thus; I might keep up inſtances of the like untruſtineſs of *particular Friends*: But all Hiſtory and the experiences of the moſt, do ſo much abound with them, that I think it needleſs. Which of us muſt not ſay with *David* that [*all men are lyars*] Pſal. 116. that is, *deceitful* and *untruſty*, either through unfaithfulneſs, weakneſs or inſufficiency; that either will forſake us, or cannot help us in the time of need?

Was *Chriſt forſaken* in his extremity by his own *Diſciples*, to teach us what to *expect*, or *bear*? Think it not ſtrange then to be conformed to your Lord in this, as well as in other parts of his humiliation. *Expect* that *Men* ſhould prove *deceitful*: Not that you ſhould entertain *cenſorious* ſuſpicions of your *particular friends*: But remember in general that Man is frail, and the beſt too ſelfiſh and *uncertain*; and that it is no wonder if thoſe ſhould prove your greateſt grief, from whom you had the higheſt expectations.

tions. Are you better then *Job*, or *David*, or Chriſt? and are your Friends more firm and unchangeable then theirs?

Conſider, 1. That Creatures muſt be ſet at a ſufficient diſtance from their Creator. All-ſufficiency, Immutability and indefectible fidelity, are proper to Jehovah. As it is no wonder for the Sun to ſet or be Eclipſed, as glorious a body as it is; ſo it is no wonder for a Friend, a pious Friend, to fail us, for a time, in the hour of our diſtreſs. There are ſome that *will not*: But there is *none but may*, if God ſhould leave them to their weakneſs. *Man* is not your *Rock*: He hath *no ſtability* but what is derived, dependant, and uncertain, and defectible. Learn therefore to reſt on God alone, and lean not too hard or confidently upon any mortal might.

2. And God will have the common infirmity of man to be *known*, that ſo the *weakeſt* may not be *utterly diſcouraged*, nor take their *weakneſs* to be *graceleſneſs*, whilſt they ſee that the ſtrongeſt alſo have their *infirmities*, though not ſo great as theirs. If any of God's Servants lives in conſtant holineſs and fidelity, without *any ſhakings* or ſtumbling in their way, it would tempt

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ſome ſelf-accuſing troubled Souls, to think that they were altogether graceleſs, becauſe they are ſo far ſhort of others. But when we read of a *Peters* denying his Maſter in ſo horrid a manner, with ſwearing and curſing that he knew not the man, *Mat.* 26. 74. And of his diſſimulation and not walking uprightly, *Gal.* 2. and of a *Davids* unfriendly and unrighteous dealing with *Mephiboſheth*, the ſeed of *Jonathan*; and of his moſt vile and treacherous dealing with *Uriah*, a faithful and deſerving Subject; it may both abate our wonder and offence at the unfaithfulneſs of our Friends, and teach us to compaſſionate their frailty, when they deſert us; and alſo ſomewhat abate our immoderate dejectedneſs and trouble, when we have failed God or man our ſelves.

3. Moreover, conſider, how the *odiouſneſs* of that *ſin*, which is the root and cauſe of ſuch unfaithfulneſs, is greatly manifeſted by the failing of our Friends. God will have the *odiouſneſs* of the *Remnants* of our *Self-love* and *Carnal mindedneſs*, and *Cowardize* appear. We ſhould not diſcern it in the Seed and Root, if we did not ſee, and taſte it in the Fruits.

Seeing

Seeing without *Taſting* will not ſufficiently convince us. A Crab looks as beautiful as an Apple; but when you *taſte* it, you better know the difference. When you muſt your ſelves be unkindly uſed by your Friends, and forſaken by them in your diſtreſs, and you have *taſted* the Fruits of the Remnants of their Worldlineſs, Selfiſhneſs and Carnal Fears, you will better know the odiouſneſs of theſe Vices, which thus break forth againſt all Obligations to God and you, and notwithſtanding the Light, the Conſcience, and perhaps the Grace, that doth reſiſt them.

4. Are you not prone to *overvalue* and *overlove* your Friends? If ſo, is not this the meereſt Remedy for your Diſeaſe? In the *loving of God*, we are in no danger of *Exceſs*; and therefore have no need of any thing to *quench* it. And in the *loving* of the *Godly purely* upon the account of *Chriſt*, and in loving *Saints* as *Saints*, we are not apt to go *too far*. But yet our Underſtandings may miſtake, and we may think that Saints have more of ſanctity than indeed they have; and we are exceeding apt to mix a *Selfiſh Common Love* with that which

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is *Spiritual* and *Holy*; and at the ſame time, when we love a *Chriſtian* as a *Chriſtian*, we are apt not only to love him (as we ought) but to *overlove* him, becauſe he is *our Friend*, and *loveth us*. Thoſe *Chriſtians* that have no *ſpecial Love to us*, we are apt to *undervalue* and *neglect*, and love them below their holineſs and worth: But thoſe that we think *entirely love us*, we love *above* their *proper Worth*, as they ſtand in the eſteem of God: Not but that we *may* love thoſe that love us, and add this love to that which is purely for the ſake of Chriſt; but we ſhould not let our *own Intereſt prevail* and *overtop* the Intereſt of Chriſt, nor love any *ſo much* for *loving us*, as for *loving Chriſt*: And if we *do ſo*, no wonder if God ſhall uſe ſuch Remedies as he ſeeth meet, to abate our excuſe of Selfiſh Love.

O how highly are we apt to think of *all that Good* which is found in thoſe who are the higheſt *eſteemers of us*, and moſt *dearly love us*; when perhaps in it ſelf it is but ſome *ordinary Good*, or *ordinary Degree* of Goodneſs which is in them! Their Love to us unreſiſtibly procureth our Love to them: And when

when we love them, it is wonderful to obſerve, how eaſily we are brought to think well of almoſt all they do, and highly to value their Judgments, Graces, Parts and Works: When *greater Excellencies* in *another* perhaps are ſcarce obſerved, or regarded but as a common thing: And therefore the deſtruction or want of Love, is apparent in the vilifying Thoughts and Speeches, that moſt Men have one of another; and in the low eſteem of the Judgments, and Performances, and Lives of other Men; (much more in their Contempt, Reproaches, and cruel Perſecutions.) Now though God will have us encreaſe in our love of Chriſt in his Members, and in our pure love of Chriſtians as ſuch, and in our common Charity to all, yea, and in our juſt Fidelity to our Friend; yet would he have us ſuſpect and moderate our ſelfiſh and exceſſive Love, and inordinate partial eſteem of one above another, when it is but for our ſelves, and on our own account. And therefore as he will make us know, that we our ſelves are no ſuch excellent Perſons, as that it ſhould make another ſo laudable, or advance his worth, becauſe he loveth us; ſo he will make

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is know, that our Friends, whom we overvalue, are but like other Men: If we exalt them too highly in our eſteem, it is a ſign that God muſt caſt them down. And as their Love to us was it that made us ſo exalt them; ſo their unkindneſs or unfaithfulneſs to us, is the fitteſt means to bring them lower in our eſtimation and affection. God is very jealous of our hearts, as to our overvaluing and overloving any of his Creatures. What we give inordinately and exceſſively to them, is ſome way or other taken from him, and given them to his Injury, and therefore to his offence. Though I know, that to be void of natural, friendly or ſocial affections, is an odious extreme on the other ſide; yet God will rebuke us, if we are guilty of Exceſs. And it's the greater and more inexcuſable fault to over-love the Creature, becauſe our Love to God is ſo cold, and hardly kindled and kept alive. He cannot take it well to ſee us dote upon duſt and frailty like our ſelves, at the ſame time when all his wondrous kindneſs, and attractive goodneſs, do cauſe but ſuch a faint and languid Love to him, which

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we our ſelves can ſcarcely feel. If therefore he cures us by permitting our Friends to ſhew us what they are, and how little they deſerve ſuch exceſſive Love (when God hath ſo little) it is no more wonder, than it is, that he is tender of his Glory, and merciful to his Servants Souls.

5 By the failing and unfaithfulneſs of our Friends, the wonderful *Patience of God* will be obſerved and honoured, as it is ſhewed both to *them and us*. When *they forſake us* in our diſtreſs, (eſpecially when we ſuffer for the Cauſe of Chriſt) it is *God* that they injure more than us: And therefore if *he* bear with them, and forgive their Weakneſs upon Repentance, why ſhould not *we* do ſo, that are much leſs injured? The worlds perfideouſneſs ſhould make us think, How great and wonderful is the patience of God, that beareth with, and beareth up ſo vile, ungrateful, treacherous Men that abuſe him, to whom they are infinitely obliged? And it ſhould make us conſider, when Men deal treacherouſly with us, How great is that mercy that hath born with, and pardoned greater wrongs, which I my ſelf have done to God, than theſe can be which

which men have done to me! It was the remembrance of *David*'s Sin, that had provoked God to raiſe up his own Son againſt him (of whom he had been too fond) which made him ſo eaſily bear the Curſes and Reproach of *Shimei*. It will make us bear abuſe from others, to remember how ill we have dealt with God, and how ill we have deſerved at his hands our ſelves.

6. And I have obſerved another of the Reaſons of God's permitting the failing of our Friends, in the *ſeaſon* and *ſucceſs*. It is, that the *Love of our Friends may not hinder us when we are called to ſuffer or die.* When we *over-love* them, it teareth our very hearts to leave them: And therefore it is a ſtrong temptation to draw us from our Duty, and to be unfaithful to the cauſe of Chriſt, leſt we ſhould be taken from our too-dear Friends, or leſt our ſuffering cauſe their too-much Grief. It is ſo hard a thing to die with willingneſs and peace, that it muſt needs be a mercy to be ſaved from the Impediments which make us backward: And the exceſſive Love of Friends and Relations, is not the leaſt of theſe Impediments.

ments. O how loth is many a one to-die, when they think of parting with Wife, or Husband or Children, or dear and faithful Friends! Now I have often obſerved, that a little before their death or ſickneſs, it is ordinary with God to permit ſome unkindneſs between ſuch too dear friends to ariſe, by which he moderated and abated their affections, and made them a great deal the willinger to dye. Then we are ready to ſay, it is time for me to leave the World, when not only the reſt of the World, but my deareſt Friends have firſt forſaken me! This helpeth us to remember our deareſt everlaſting Friend, and to be grieved at the heart that we have been no truer our ſelves to him, who would not have forſaken us in our extremity. And ſometimes it makes us ev'n weary of the world, and to ſay as *Elias*, Lord take away my Life, &c. 1 *King* 19. 4. 10, 14. When we muſt ſay, I thought I had one friend left, and behold even he forſaketh me in my diſtreſs.] As the love of Friends intangleth our affections to thi, World, ſo to be weaned by their unkindneſſes from our Friends, is a great help to looſen us from the World, and proveth oft a very great

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mercy to a Soul that is ready to depart.

And as the friends that Love us moſt, and have moſt intereſt in your eſteem and Love, may do more than others, in tempting us to be unfaithful to our Lord, to to entertain any errour, to commit any ſin, or to flinch in ſuffering; ſo when God had permitted them to forſake us, and to loſe their too great intereſt in us, we are fortified againſt all temptations from them. I have known where a former intimate friend hath grown ſtrange, and broken former friendſhip, and quickly after turned to ſuch dangerous ways and errours, as convinced the other of the mercifulneſs of God, in weakning his temptation by his friends deſertion; who might elſe have drawn him along with him into ſin. And I have often obſerved, that when the husbands have turned from Religion to Infidelity, Familiſm, or ſome dangerous hereſie, that God hath permitted them to hate and abuſe their wives ſo inhumanly, as that it preſerveth the poor women from the temptation of following them in their Apoſtaſie or ſin: When as ſome other women with whom their husbands have dealt more kindly, have been drawn away with them into pernicious paths. Therefore

Therefore ſtill I muſt ſay, we were undone if we had the diſpoſing of our own conditions. It would belong before we ſhould have been willing our ſelves to be thus unkindly dealt with by our friends: And yet God hath made it to many a ſoul, a notable means of preſerving them from being undone for ever. Yea the *unfaithfulneſs* of all our *friends*, and the *malice* and *cruelty* of all our *enemies*, doth us not uſually ſo much harm, as the *love* and *temptation* of ſome one deluded erring friend, whom we are ready to follow into the gulf.

7. Laſtly, conſider that it is not *deſirable or ſuitable to our ſtate, to have too much of our comfort by any creature*: Not only becauſe it is moſt pure and ſweet which is moſt immediately from God; but alſo becauſe we are very prone to over-love the Creature; and if it ſhould but ſeem to be very commodious to us, by ſerving our neceſſities or deſires, it would ſeem the more amiable, and therefore be the ſtronger ſnare: The work of mortification doth much conſiſt in the annihilation or deadneſs of all the Creatures as to any power to draw away our hearts from God, or to entangle us and detain

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ſs from our duty. And the more excellent and lovely the Creature appeareth to us, the leſs it is dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder or enſnare us.

When you have well conſidered all theſe things, I ſuppoſe you will admire the wiſdom of God in leaving you under this kind of tryal, and weaning you from every creature, and teaching you by his Providence as well as by his word, to *Ceaſe from man, whoſe breath is in his noſtrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?*] And you will ſee that it's no great wonder that corrupted ſouls, that live in other ſins, ſhould be guilty of this unfaithfulneſs to their friends: And that he that dare unthankfully trample upon the unſpeakable kindneſs of the Lord ſhould deal unkindly with the beſt of men. You make no great wonder at other kind of ſins, when you ſee the world continually commit them; why then ſhould you make a greater or a ſtranger matter of this than of the reſt? Are *you* better than *God*? Muſt unfaithfulneſs *to you* be made more hainous, than that unfaithfulneſs *to him*, which yet you daily ſee and ſlight? The *leaſt* wrong to God is a thouſandfold more

than the greateſt that can be done to you, as ſuch. Have you done that for your neareſt friend, which God hath done for him and you, and all men? Their obligations to you are nothing in compariſon of their great and manifold obligations to God.

And *you* know that you have more wronged God, *your ſelves*, than any man ever wronged *you*: And if yet for all that *he* bear with *you*, have you not great reaſons to bear with others?

Yea, you have not been innocent *towards men* your ſelves: Did you never wrong or fail another? Or rather, are you not apter to ſee and aggravate the wrong that others do to you, than that which you have done to others? May you not call to mind your own neglects, and ſay, as *Adonizebeck*, Judg. 1. 7. [*Threeſcore and ten Kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: As I have done, ſo God hath requited me.*] Many a one have I failed or wronged: and no wonder if others fail and wrong me.]

Nay you have been much more unfaithful and injurious to *your ſelves*, than ever any *other* hath been to you. No friend was

was ſo near you, as *your ſelves:* None had ſuch a charge of you: None had ſuch helps and advantages to do you good or hurt: And yet all the Enemies you have in the world, even in Earth or Hell, have not wronged and hurt you half ſo much as you have done your ſelves. O, methinks the man or woman that knoweth themſelves, and knoweth what it is to Repent; that ever ſaw the greatneſs of their ſin and folly, ſhould have no great mind or leiſure, or aggravate the failings of their friends, to the injuries of their enemies, conſidering what they have proved to themſelves! Have I forfeited my *own ſalvation*, and deſerved everlaſting wrath, and ſold my Saviour and my Soul for ſo baſe a thing as ſinful pleaſure, and ſhall I ever make a wonder of it, that *another* man doth me ſome *temporal hurt?* Was any friend ſo near to me as my ſelf? Or more obliged to me? O ſinful ſoul, let *thy own*, rather then *thy friends* deceit and treachery, and neglects, be the matter of thy diſpleaſure, wonder and complaints!

And let thy *Confirmity* herein to Jeſus Chriſt, be thy holy ambition and delight: Not as it is *thy ſuffering*, nor as it is cauſed

ſed by *mens ſin:* but as it is thy *Confirmity* and fellowſhip in the ſufferings of thy Lord, and cauſed by his Love.

I have already ſhewed you that *ſufferers* for Chriſt, are in the higheſt form among his Diſciples. The Order of his followers uſually is this; 1. At our entrance, and in the loweſt form, we are exerciſed with the fears of Hell, and Gods diſpleaſure, and in the Works of Repentance for the ſin that we have done. 2. In the ſecond form, we come to think more ſeriouſly of the Remedy, and to enquire what we ſhall do to be ſaved, and to underſtand better what Chriſt hath done and ſuffered, and what he is and will be to us; and to value him and his love and grace. And here we are much enquiring how we may know our own ſincerity, and our intereſt in Chriſt, and are labouring for ſome aſſurance, and looking after ſigns of Grace. 3. In the next form or order we are ſearching after further Knowledge, and labouring better to underſtand the myſteries of Religion, and to get above the Rudiments and firſt Principles: And here if we eſcape turning bare Opinioniſts or Hereticks by the

ſnare of Controverſie or Curioſity, it's well. 4. In the next form we ſet our ſelves to the fuller *improvement* of all our further *degrees of Knowledge*; and to *digeſt it all*, and turn it into *ſtronger Faith*, and *Love*, and *Hope*, *and greater Humility*, *Patience*, *Self-denial*, *Mortification*, and contempt of Earthly Vanities, and hatred of Sin; and to walk more watchfully and holily, and to be more in holy Duty. 5. In the next form we grow to be more publick-ſpirited: To ſet our Hearts on the Churches welfare, and long more for the progreſs of the Goſpel, and for the good of others; and to do all the good —the World that we are able, for mens Souls or Bodies, but eſpecially to long and lay out our ſelves for the Converſion and Salvation of ignorant, ſecure, unconverted Souls. The *counterfeit* of this, is, An eager deſire to Proſelyte others to our Opinions or that Religion which we have choſen, by the direction of Fleſh and Blood, or which is not of God, nor according unto Godlineſs, but doth ſubſerve our carnal Ends. 6. In the next form we grow to ſtudy more the pure and wonderful

Love of God in Chriſt, and to reliſh and admire that Love, and to be taken up with the goodneſs and tender mercies of the Lord, and to be kindling the Flames of holy Love to him that hath thus loved us; and to keep our Souls in the Exerciſe of that Love: And withal to live in Joy, and Thanks, and Praiſe to him that hath redeemed us and loved us. And alſo, by Faith to converſe in Heaven, and to live in holy contemplation, beholding the Glory of the Father and the Redeemer in the Glaſs, which is fitted to our preſent uſe, till we come to ſee him face to face. Thoſe that are the higheſt in this form, do ſo walk with God, and burn in Love, and aim ſo much above inferiour Vanities, and are ſo converſant by Faith in Heaven, that their hearts even dwell there, and there they long to be forever. 7. And in the higheſt form in the School of Chriſt, we are exerciſing this confirmed Faith and Love, in Sufferings, eſpecially for Chriſt. In following him without Croſs, and being conformed to him, and glorifying God in the fulleſt exerciſe and diſcovery of his Graces in us, and in an actual trampling upon all that ſtandeth

ſtandeth up againſt him, for our hearts; and in bearing the fulleſt witneſs to his Truth and Cauſe, by conſtant enduring, though to the Death. Not but that the *weakeſt* that are ſincere, *muſt ſuffer for Chriſt*, if he call them to it. *Martyrdom* it ſelf is not proper to the *ſtrong Believers*: Whoever forſaketh not all that he hath for Chriſt, cannot be his Diſciple, *Luke* 14. 33. But to ſuffer with that Faith and Love forementioned, and in that manner, is proper to the ſtrong: And uſually God doth not try and exerciſe his young and weak ones with the tryals of the ſtrong; nor ſet his Infants on ſo hard a ſervice, nor put them in the front or hotteſt of the Battel, as he doth the ripe confirmed Chriſtians. The ſufferings of their inward Doubts and Fears doth take up ſuch. It is the *ſtrong* that ordinarily are called to *Sufferings for Chriſt*, at leaſt in any *high Degree*; I have digreſt thus far to make it plain to you, that our *Conformity to Chriſt, and fellowſhip with him in his Sufferings*, in any *notable degree*, is the lot of his *beſt confirmed Servants*, and the higheſt form in his School, among his Diſciples: And

therefore not to be inordinately feared or abhorred, nor to be the matter of impatiency, but of holy joy; and in ſuch infirmities we may glory. And if it be ſo of *Sufferings* in the *general* (for Chriſt) then is it ſo of this particular ſort of Suffering, even to be forſaken of all our beſt and neareſt, deareſt Friends, when we come to be moſt abuſed by the Enemies.

For my own part, I muſt confeſs that as I am much wanting in other parts of my conformity to Chriſt, ſo I take my ſelf to be yet much ſhort of what I expect he ſhould advance me to, as long as my Friends no more forſake me. It is not long ſince I found my ſelf in a low (if not a doubting) caſe, becauſe I had ſo few Enemies and ſo little Sufferings for the Cauſe of Chriſt (though I had much of other ſorts:) And now that doubt is removed by the multitude of Furies which God hath let looſe againſt me. But yet, methinks, while my *Friends themſelves* are ſo *friendly* to me, I am much ſhort of what I think I muſt at laſt attain to.

But

BUT let us look further in the Text, and see what is the *Cause* of the *failing* and *forsaking* Christ in the *Disciples*; and what it is that they betake themselves to, when they leave him.

[*Ye shall be scattered every Man to his Own.*]

Self-Denyal was not perfect in them, selfishness therefore in this hour of temptation did prevail. They had before forsaken all to follow Christ; they had left their Parents, their Families, their Estates, their Trades, to be his Disciples: But though they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamt of a visible Kingdom, and did all this with too carnal Expectations of being great men on Earth, when Christ should begin his Reign. And therefore when they saw his apprehension and ignominious suffering, and thought now they were frustrate of their hopes, they seem to repent that they had followed him (though not by Apostacy and an habitual or plenary change of mind, yet) by a sudden passionate, frightful apprehension, which vanished when grace per-

formed its part. They now began to think, that they had *lives* of their *Own* to ſave, and *families* of their *Own* to mind, and *buſineſs* of their *Own* to do. They had before forſaken their private *Intereſts* and *Affairs*, and gathered themſelves to Jeſus Chriſt, and lived in Communion with him, and one another. But now they return to their Trades and Callings, *and are ſcattered every Man to his own.*

Selfiſhneſs is the great Enemy of all Societies, of all Fidelity and Friendſhip. There is no truſting that perſon in whom it is predominant. And the Remnants of it where it doth not Reign, do make men walk unevenly and unſtedfaſtly towards God and men. They will certainly deny both God and their Friends, in a time of tryal who are not able to deny themſelves: Or rather, he never was a real Friend to any, that is predominantly ſelfiſh. They have alway ſome intereſt of their *Own*, which their Friend muſt needs contradict, or is inſufficient to ſatisfie. Their Houſes, their Lands, their Moneys, their Children, their Honour, or ſomething which they call their *Own*, will be frequently

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the matter of contention; and are so *near them*, that they can for the sake of these cast off the neareſt Friend. Contract no special friendship with a selfish man: Nor put no confidence in him, whatever Friendship he may profess. He is so confined to himself, that he hath no true love to spare for others: If he seem to love a Friend, it is not *as a Friend*, but as a *Servant*, or at best as a Benefactor: He loveth *you for himself*, as he loveth his Mony, or Horse, or House, because you may be serviceable to him: Or as a Horse or Dog doth love his Keeper, for feeding him. And therefore when your Provender is gone, his Love is gone; when you have done feeding him, he hath done loving you. When you have no more for *him*, he hath no more for *you*.

Object. *But (some will say) it is not the falseness of my Friend that I lament, but the separation, or the loss of one that was most faithful: I have found the deceitfulness of ordinary Friends; and therefore the more highly prize those few that are sincere. I had but one true friend among abundance of self-seekers; and that*

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one is dead, or taken from me, and I am left as in a Wilderneſs, having no mortal man that I can truſt or take much comfort in.

Anſw. Is this your caſe? I pray you anſwer theſe few Queſtions, and ſuffer the truth to have its proper work upon your mind.

Queſt. 1. *Who was it that deprived you of your Friend?* Was it not God? Did not he that gave him you take him from you? Was it not his Lord and Owner that call'd him home? And can God do any thing injuriouſly or amiſs? will you not give him leave to do as he liſt with his own? Dare you think that there was *wanting* either *Wiſdom* or *Goodneſs*, *Juſtice* or *Mercy* in God's diſpoſal of your Friend? Or will you ever have *Reſt*, if you cannot have *Reſt* in the *Will* of *God?*

2. *How know you what ſin your Friend might have fallen into, if he had lived as long as you would have him?* You'll ſay, that God could have preſerved him from ſin. It's true: But God preſerveth *ſapientially*, by means, as well as *omnipotentially:* And ſometime he ſeeth that the temptations to that perſon are like

like to be ſo ſtrong, and his Corruption like to get ſuch advantage, and that no means is ſo fit as Death it ſelf, for his preſervation. And if God had permitted your Friend by temptation to have fallen into ſome ſcandalous ſin, or courſe of evil, or into errors, or falſe ways, would it not have been much worſe than Death to him and you? God might have ſuffered your Friend that was ſo *faithful*, to have been ſifted and ſhaken as *Peter* was, and to have denied his Lord; and to have ſeemed in your *own Eyes*, as odious as he before ſeemed *amiable*.

3. *How know you what unkindneſs to your ſelf, your deareſt friend might have been guilty of?* Alas! there is greater frailty and inconſtancy in man, than you are aware of. And there are ſadder roots of Corruption unmortified, that may ſpring up into bitter Fruits, than moſt of us ever diſcover in our ſelves. Many a Mother hath her heart broken by the unnaturalneſs of ſuch a Child, or the unkindneſs of ſuch a Husband, as if they had died before, would have been lamented by her, with great impatience and exceſs. How confident ſoever

soever you may be of the future Fidelity of your Friend, you little know what tryal might have discovered. Many a one hath failed God and Man that once were as confident of *themselves*, as ever you were of your *Friend*. And which of us see not reason to be distrustful of our selves? And can we know another better than our selves? or promise more concerning him?

4. *How know you what great calamity might have befallen your Friend, if he had lived as long as you desired?* When the *Righteous* seem to men to *perish, and merciful Men are taken away*, it is *from the evil to come* that they are taken, *Isa.* 57. 1. How many of my Friends have I lamented as if they had dyed unseasonably, concerning whom some following Providence quickly shewed me, that it would have been a grievous misery to them to have lived longer! Little know you what Calamities were imminent on his Person, his Family, Kindred, Neighbours, Country, that would have broke his Heart: What if a Friend of yours had died immediately before some calamitous subversion of a Kingdom, some ruines of the Church, *&c.* And if ignorantly he had done

done that which brought these things to pass, can you imagin how lamentably sad his life would have been to him, to have seen the Church, the Gospel, and his Country in so sad a case? especially if it had been long of him? Many that have unawares done that which hath ruined but a particular Friend, have lived in so much grief and trouble, as made them consent that death should both revenge the injured on them, and conclude their misery. What then would it have been to have seen the publick good subverted, and the faithful overwhelmed in misery, and the Gospel hindred, and holy worship changed for deceit and vanity; and for Conscience to have been daily saying, [I had a hand in all this misery: I kindled the fire that hath burned up all.]

What comfort can you think such Friends if they had survived, would have found on Earth? Unless it were a comfort to hear the Complaints of the afflicted, to see and hear such odious sins as sometimes vexed righteous *Lot* to see and hear; or to hear of the scandals of one Friend, and the Apostasie of another, and the sinful compliances and declinings of a third; and to be under temptations, reproaches

proaches and afflictions themſelves? Is it a matter to be ſo much lamented that God hath prevented their greater miſeries and wo?

5. *What was the World to your Friends while they did enjoy it?* Or what is it now, or like to be hereafter to your ſelves? Was it ſo *good* and *kind* to them, as that you ſhould lament their *ſeparation* from it? Was it not to them a place of toil and trouble, of envy and vexation, of enmity and poiſon? of ſucceſſive cares and fears and griefs? And worſt of all, a place of ſin? Did they groan under the burden of a ſinful nature, a diſtempered, tempted, troubled heart of languiſhings and weakneſs of every grace; of the rebukes of God, the wounds of Conſcience, and the malice of a wicked VVorld? And would you have them under theſe again? Or is their deliverance become your grief? Did you not often joyn in prayer with them, for deliverance from Malice, Calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations and Sin? And now thoſe Prayers are anſwered in their deliverance: And do you now *grieve* at that which then you *prayed* for?

Doth the VVorld uſe *your ſelves* ſo well and

nd kindly, as that you ſhould be ſorry that your Friends partake not of the Feaſt? Are you not groaning from day to day your ſelves? And are you grieved that your Friends are taken from your griefs? you are not well pleaſed with your own condition: When you look into your hearts, you are diſpleaſed and complain; when you look into your *lives*, you are diſpleaſed and complain: When you look into your *Families*, into your *Neighbourhoods*, unto your *Friends*, unto the *Church*, unto the Kingdom, unto the World, you are diſpleaſed and complain: And are you alſo diſpleaſed that your Friends are not under the ſame diſpleaſedneſs and complaints as you? Is the World a place of *Reſt* or *trouble* to you? And would you have your Friends to be as far from *Reſt* as you?

And if you have ſome *Eaſe* and *Peace* at preſent, you little know what ſtorms are neer! You may ſee the days, you may hear the tydings, you may feel the griping griefs and pains, which may make you call for Death your ſelves, and make you ſay that a life on Earth is no felicity, and make you confeſs that they are *Bleſſed that are dead in the Lord, as reſting*

ing from their Labours, and being paſt theſe troubles, griefs and fears. Many a poor troubled Soul is in ſo great diſtreſs, as that they take their own lives to have ſome taſte of Hell: And yet at the ſame time, are grieving becauſe their *friends* are taken from them, who would have been *grieved for their griefs*, and for ought they know might have fallen into as ſad a ſtate as they themſelves are now lamenting.

6. *Do you think it is for the Hurt or the good of your Friend, that he is removed hence?* It cannot be for his *Hurt* unleſs he be in Hell. (At leaſt, it is uncertain whether to live would have been for his Good, by an increaſe of Grace, and ſo for greater Glory.) And if he be in *Hell*, he was no fit perſon for you to take *much pleaſure* in upon Earth: He might be indeed a fit Object for your *Compaſſion*, but not for your *Complacency*. Sure you are not undone for want of ſuch company as God will not endure in his ſight, and you muſt be ſeparated from for ever. But if they be in *Heaven*, you are ſcarce their Friends if you would wiſh them thence. *Friendſhip* hath as great reſpect to the *good of our Friends* as of our

ſelves.

ſelves. And do you pretend to Friendſhip, and yet lament the removal of your friend to his greateſt happineſs! Do you ſet more by your own enjoying his company, then by enjoying God in perfect bleſſedneſs? This ſheweth a very culpable defect either in *Faith* or *Friendſhip*; and therefore beſeemeth not *Chriſtians* and *Friends*. If *Love* teacheth us to mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoyce with them that rejoyce; can it be an act of *rational Love* to *mourn for them* that are poſſeſſed of the higheſt everlaſting joyes?

7. *God will not honour himſelf by one only, but by many:* He knoweth beſt when his work is done: When our Friends have finiſhed all that God intended them for, when he put them into the World, is it not time for them to be gone, and for others to take their places, and finiſh *their Work* alſo in their time? God will have a ſucceſſion of his Servants in the World. Would you not come down, and give place to him that is to follow you, when your part is played, and his is to begin? If *David* had not dyed, there had been no *Solomon*, no *Jehoſhaphat*, no *Hezekiah*, no *Joſiah*, to ſucceed him and honour

nour God in the ſame Throne. You may as wiſely grudge that one day only takes not up all the Week, and that the clock ſtriketh not the ſame hour ſtill, but proceedeth from one to two, from two to three, *&c.* as to murmur that one man only continueth not to do the work of his place excluding his Succeſſors.

8. *You muſt not have all your Mercies by one Meſſenger or Hand:* God will not have you confine your *Love* to one only of his Servants: And therefore he will not make one only uſeful to you: But when one hath delivered his Meſſage and done his part, perhaps God will ſend you other Mercies by another hand: And it belongeth to him to chooſe the Meſſenger who gives the gift. And if you will Childiſhly dote upon the firſt Meſſenger, and ſay you will have no more, your frowardneſs more deſerveth Correction than Compaſſion: And if you be kept faſting till you can thankfully take your Food, from any hand that your Father ſends it by, it is a Correction very ſuitable to your ſin.

9. *Do you ſo highly value your Friends for God, or for them, or for your ſelves, in the final conſideration?* If it was *for God*, what

what reaſon of trouble have you, that *God* hath diſpoſed of them, according to his wiſdom and unerring Will? ſhould you not then be more pleaſed that *God* hath them, and employeth them in his higheſt ſervice, than diſpleaſed that *you* want them?

But if you value them and love them for *themſelves*, they are now more *lovely* when they are more perfect; and they are now fitter for your content and joy, when they have themſelves unchangeable content and joy, than they could be in their ſin and ſorrows.

But if you valued and loved them but for your *ſelves only*, it is juſt with God to take them from you, to teach you to value Men to righter ends, and upon better conſiderations: And both to prefer God before your ſelves, and better to underſtand the nature of true Friendſhip, and better to know that your own felicity is not in the hands of any Creature, but of God alone.

10. *Did you improve your Friends while you had them?* or did you only love them, while you made but little *uſe of them* for your Souls? If you uſed them not, it was juſt with God for all *your*

Love

Love to take them from you. They were given you as your *Candle*, not only to *Love it*, but to *work by the Light* of it: And as your *Garments*; not only to *Love them*, but to *wear them*; and as your *meat*, not only to *Love it*, but to *feed upon it*. Did you receive their Counsel, and hearken to their Reproofs, and pray with them, and confer with them upon those holy Truths that tended to elevate your minds to God, and to inflame your Breasts with sacred Love? If not, be it now known to you, that God gave you not such helps and mercies only to talk of, or look upon, and Love, but also to improve for the benefit of your Souls.

11. *Do you not seem to forget both where you are your selves, and where you must shortly and for ever live?* Where would you have your *Friends*, but where you must be *your selves?* Do you mourn that they are taken hence? Why, if they had staid *here* a thousand years, how little of that time should you have had their Company? When you are almost leaving the World *your selves*, would you not send your treasure before you to the place where you must abide? How quickly will you pass from hence to God, where

where you ſhall find your Friends that you lamented as if they had been loſt, and there ſhall dwell with them for ever! O fooliſh Mourners! would you not have your Friends at *home*! at *their home* and *your home*, with *their Father*, and *your Father*; *their God*, and *your God*? Shall you not there enjoy them long enough! Can you ſo much miſs them for one day, that muſt live with them to all Eternity? And is not Eternity long enough for you to enjoy your Friends in?

Obj. *But I do not know whether ever I ſhall there have any diſtinct knowledge of them, or love to them, and whether God ſhall not there be ſo far All in All, as that we ſhall need or fetch no comfort from the Creature.*

Anſw. There is no reaſon for either of theſe doubts. For, 1. You cannot juſtly think that the knowledge of the Glorified ſhall be more confuſed or imperfect than the knowledge of natural Men on Earth. We ſhall know *much more*, but not ſo *much leſs*. Heaven exceedeth Earth in knowledge, as much as it doth in joy.

2. The Angels in Heaven have now a diſtinct particular knowledge of the leaſt Believers; rejoycing particularly in their converſion,

conversion, and being called by Christ himself [*Their Angels.*] Therefore when we shall be *equal to the Angels*, we shall certainly know our neareſt Friends that there dwell with us, and are employed in the ſame attendance.

3. *Abraham* knew the Rich Man in Hell, and the Man knew *Abraham and Lazarus*: Therefore we ſhall have as diſtinct a Knowledge.

4. The two Diſciples knew *Moſes* and *Elias* in the Mount, whom they had never ſeen before: Though it is poſſible Chriſt told them who they were, yet there is no ſuch thing expreſſed: And therefore it is as probable that they knew them by the Communication of their irradiating g'ory. Much more ſhall we be then illuminated to a clearer knowle'ge.

5. It is ſaid expreſly, 1 *Cor.* 13. 10, 11, 12. That our *preſent knowledge ſhall be done away* only in regard of its *imperfection*; and not of *it ſelf*, which ſhall be perfected: [*when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part ſhall be done away*:] As we put away *childiſh thoughts and ſpeeches*, when we become men: The change will be from [*ſeeing in a glaſs*] to [*ſeeing face to face*] and from

from [*knowing in part*] to [*knowing even as we are known.*]

2. And that we ſhall both *Know*, and *Love* and *rejoyce* in *creatures* even in Heaven, notwithſtanding that God is all in all, apeareth further thus.

1. *Chriſt* in his glorified humanity is a *Creature*: and yet there is no doubt but all his members will there Know and Love him in his glorified humanity, without any derogation from the glory of the Deity.

2. The *Body of Chriſt* will continue its unity, and every *member* will be ſo nearly related, even in Heaven, that they cannot chooſe but *Know* and *Love* each other. Shall we be ignorant of the *members of our Body*? and not be concerned in their felicity, with whom we are ſo nearly one?

3. The ſtate and felicity of the Church hereafter, is frequently deſcribed in Scripture as conſiſtent in *Society*. It is a *Kingdom*, the *City of God*, the *Heavenly Jeruſalem*: and it is mentioned as part of our happineſs to be of that *ſociety*, Heb. 12. 22, 23, 24, *&c.*

4. The Saints are called *Kings* themſelves: and it is ſaid that they ſhall *judge*

the world, and the Angels (And *Judging* in Scripture is frequently put for *Governing*) *Therefore*, (whether there will be another world of mortals which they ſhall Govern as Angles now Govern *men*; or whether the Miſery of damned men and Angels will partly conſiſt in as baſe a ſubjection to the glorified Saints, as Dogs now have to men, or wicked reprobates on Earth to Angles; or whether in reſpect of *both theſe* together, the Saints ſhall then be Kings, and Rule and Judge; or whether it be only the participation of the Glory of Chriſt, that is called a Kingdom, I will not here determine, but) it is moſt clear that they will have a diſtinct particular *Knowledge* of the world, which they themſelves muſt judge; and ſome concernment in that work.

5. It is put into the deſcription of the Happineſs of the Saints, that they ſhall come from the Eaſt, and from the Weſt, and ſhall ſit down with *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of God. Therefore they ſhall know them, and take ſome comfort in their preſence.

6. *Love* (even to the *Saints* as well as *unto God*) is one of the graces that ſhall endure *for ever*, 1 Cor. 13. It is exerciſed

erciſed upon an *Immortal object* (the Image, and Children of the Moſt High) and therefore muſt be one of the *Immortal Graces*. For Grace in the *Nature* of it dyeth not: and therefore if the *Object* ceaſe not, how ſhould the *Grace* ceaſe, unleſs you will call it's *perfecting* a *ceaſing*?

It is a ſtate too high for ſuch as we, and I think for any meer Creature to live ſo *Immediately* and *only upon God*, as to have no *uſe* for any fellow *Creature*, nor no comfort in them. God can make uſe of Glorified Creatures, in ſuch ſubſerviency and ſubordination to himſelf, as ſhall be no diminution to his All-ſufficiency or Honour, nor to our glory and felicity. We muſt take heed of fancying even ſuch a Heaven it ſelf, as is above the capacity of a Creature; as ſome very wiſe Divines think they have done, that tell us we ſhall *Immediately ſee Gods Eſſence* (his *Glory* being that which is provided for our *intuition* and felicity, and is diſtinct from his *Eſſence*; being not *every where* as his *Eſſence* is) And as thoſe do that tell us becauſe that God will be *All in All*, therefore we ſhall there have none of our comfort by any Creature. Though

fleſh and blood ſhall not enter into that Kingdom, but our *Bodies* will then be *Spiritual Bodies*; yet will they be really the ſame as now, and diſtinct from our Souls: and therefore muſt have a felicity ſuitable to a *Body* glorified: And if the ſoul did *immediately* ſee *God's Eſſence*, yet as no reaſon can conclude that it can ſee *nothing elſe*, or that it can ſee even *Created Good*, and *not Love it*, ſo the *Body* however muſt have objects and felicity fit for a Body.

Obj. *But it is ſaid, If we knew Chriſt after the fleſh, henceforth know we him no more.*

Anſw. No doubt but all the carnality in *Principles*, *matter*, *manner* and *ends* of our knowledge will then ceaſe as it's imperfection: But that a *carnal* knowledge be turned into a *ſpiritual*, is no more a diminution to it, than it is to the glory of our *Bodies*, to be made like the ſtars in the Firmament of our Father.

Obj. *But then I ſhall have no more comfort in my preſent friends than in any other.*

Anſw. 1. If you *had* none in them, it is no diminution to our happineſs, if indeed we ſhould have all in God immediately

ately and alone. 2. But if you have as much in others that you never knew before, that will not diminiſh any of your comfort in your antient Friends. 3. But it is moſt probable to us, that as there is a twofold Object for our love in the Glorified Saints; one is their *Holineſs*, and the other is the *Relation* which they ſtood in between God and us, being made his inſtruments for our converſion and ſalvation, ſo that we ſhall *love Saints in Heaven* in *both* reſpects: And in the firſt reſpect (which is the chiefeſt) we ſhall love thoſe moſt that have moſt of God, and the greateſt Glory (though ſuch as we never knew on Earth.) And in the ſecond reſpect, we ſhall love thoſe moſt that were employed by God for our greateſt good.

And that we ſhall not there lay by ſo much reſpect to *our ſelves*, as to forget or diſregard our *Benefactors*, is manifeſt, 1. In that we ſhall forever *remember Chriſt*, and *love him*, and *praiſe him*, as one that *formerly Redeemed us*, and *waſhed us in his Blood, and hath made us Kings and Prieſts to God:* And therefore we may alſo in *juſt ſubordination to Chriſt*, remember them *with Love and*

Thankfulneſs, that were his *Inſtruments* for the Collation of theſe benefits.

2. And this kind of *Self-love* (to be ſenſible of *Good and Evil* to our ſelves) is none of the *ſinful* or *imperfect ſelfiſhneſs* to be renounced or laid by, but part of our very *Nature*, and as inſeparable from us, as we are from our ſelves.

Much more, were it not digreſſive, might be ſaid on this ſubject; but I ſhall only add, that as God doth draw us to every holy Duty, by ſhewing us the *excellency* of that duty; and as *perpetuity* is not the ſmalleſt *excellency*; ſo he hath purpoſely mentioned that *Love endureth for ever* (when he had deſcribed the *Love of one another*) as a principle motive to *kindle and encreaſe this Love*. And therefore thoſe that think they ſhall have no *perſonal Knowledge* of one another, nor *perſonal Love* to one another (for we cannot *Love* perſonally, if we *know not* perſonally) do take a moſt effectual courſe to deſtroy in their ſouls all holy ſpecial Love to Saints, by caſting away that principal or very great motive given them by the Holy Ghoſt, I am not able to *Love much* where I foreknow that I ſhall not *Love long*. I cannot Love a comely

comely Inn, ſo well as a nearer dwelling of my own, becauſe I muſt be gone to morrow. Therefore muſt I love my *Bible* better than my *Lawbooks* or *Phyſickbooks*, &c. Becauſe it leadeth to Eternity. And therefore I muſt Love *Holineſs* in my ſelf and others, better than meat and drink, and wealth, and honour, and beauty and pleaſure; becauſe it muſt be Loved for ever, when the Love of theſe muſt needs be tranſitory, as *they* are tranſitory. I muſt profeſs from the very experience of my ſoul, that it is the belief that I ſhall Love my friends in Heaven, that principally kindleth my Love to them on Earth: And if I thought I ſhould never know them after death, and conſequently never love them more, when this life is ended, I ſhould in reaſon number them with temporal things, and Love them comparatively but a little; even as I Love other tranſitory things (allowing for the excellency in the nature of Grace) But now I converſe with ſome delight with my Godly friends, as believing I ſhall converſe with them for ever, and take comfort in the very *Dead* and *Abſent*, as believing we ſhall ſhortly *meet in Heaven*: And I Love them, I hope, with

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a Love that is of a *Heavenly Nature*, while I Love them as the *Heirs of Heaven*, with a Love which I expect ſhall there be perfected, and more *fully* and *for ever* exerciſed,

12. The laſt Reaſon that I give you, to move you to bear the *Loſs* or *Abſence* of your friends, is, that it gives you the loudeſt call to retire from the world, and to converſe with God himſelf, and to long for Heaven, where you ſhall be ſeperated from your friends no more. And your forſaken ſtate will ſomewhat aſſiſt you to that ſolitary converſe with God, which it calls you to: But this brings us up to the third part of the Text.

AND yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father is with me.]

Doct. *When all forſake us and leave us (as to them) alone, we are far from being ſimply alone; becauſe God is with us.*

He is not without company, that is with the King, though twenty others have turned him off. He is not without Light that hath the ſhining Sun, though all his Candles be put out. If God be our God, he is our All, and is enough for us:

us: And if he be our All, we ſhall not much find the want of creatures while he is with us.

For 1. He is *with us*, who is *Every-where*, and therefore is never from us; and knoweth all the ways and projects of our enemies; being *with them in wrath*, as he is *with us in mercy*.

2. He is *with us* who is *Almighty*, ſufficient to preſerve us, conquerable by none? and therefore while he is with us, we need not *fear* what man can do unto us: For they can do nothing but what he will: No danger, no ſickneſs, no trouble or want can be ſo great as to make it any difficulty to God to deliver us when and how he pleaſe.

3. He is with us who is *Infinitely wiſe*, and therefore we need not fear the ſubtilty of enemies; nor ſhall any of his undertaken works for his Church or us, miſcarry for want of foreſight, or through any overſight. We ſhall be preſerved even from our own *Folly*, as well as from our Enemies ſubtilty: For it is not our own wiſdome that our greateſt concernments do principally reſt upon, nor that our ſafety and peace are chiefly ſecured by; but it is the Wiſdome of our great

Preſerver.

Preſerver. He knoweth what to do with us, and what Paths to lead us in, and what is beſt for us in all conditions: And he hath promiſed to Teach us, and will be our ſure infallible Guide.

4. He is with us who is *Infinitely Good*, and therefore is only fit to be a continual delight and ſatisfaction to our ſouls: That hath nothing in him to diſaffect us, or diſcourage us: whom we may love without fear of over-loving; and need not ſet any bounds to our Love, the Object of it being infinite.

5. He is *with us*, who is moſt nearly related to us, and moſt dearly loveth us; and therefore will never be wanting to us in any thing that is fit for us to have. This is he that is *with us*, when all have left us, and as to Man we are alone; and therefore we may well ſay that we are not alone. Of this I ſhall ſay more anon in the application.

Queſt. But how is he with us? Anſw. 1. *He is with us* not only in his *Eſſential preſence*, as he is every where, but as by his *Gracious Fatherly preſence*: We are in his *Family*, attending on him: Even as the Eye of a Servant is to the hand of his Maſter: We are *always with him*, and

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(as he phraseth it himself in the Parable) *Luke* 15. *all that he hath is ours*, that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us, and all the Provisions of his bounty for his Children. When *we awake, we* should *be still with him*: When we go abroad we should be always as before him: Our life and works should be a *Walking with God.*

2. He is always *with us efficiently* to *do us good*; Though we have none else that *careth* for us, yet will he never cast us out of his care, but biddeth us cast our care on him, as promising that he will *care for us.* Though we have none else to *provide* for us, he is always with us, and our Father knoweth what we want, and will make the best provision for us, *Mat.* 6.32, 33. Though we have none else to defend us against the power of our Enemies, he is always with us to be our sure defence: He is the Rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built. He gathereth us to himself as the Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, *Mat.* 23,37,38. And sure while *Love* is thus protecting us, we may well say that the *Father himself is with us.* Though in all our wants we have no other to supply us, yet he is still with us to perform his promise, that no good

good thing ſhall be wanting to them that fear him. Though we may have none elſe to ſtrengthen and help us, and ſupport us in our weakneſs, yet he is always with us, whoſe Grace is ſufficient for us, to manifeſt his ſtrength in weakneſs. Though we have no other to teach us, and to *reſolve our doubts*, yet he is with us that is our chiefeſt Maſter, and hath taken us to be his Diſciples, and will be our Light and Guide, and will lead us into the Truth. Though we have none elſe to be our *Comforters*, in our agony, darkneſs or diſtreſs; but all forſake us, or are taken from us, and we are expoſed as *Hagar* with *Iſhmael* in a Wilderneſs; yet ſtill the Father of all conſolations is with us; his Spirit who is the Comforter is in us: And he that ſo often ſpeaketh the words of Comfort to us in his Goſpel, and ſaith, [*Be of good chear; let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid, &c.*] will ſpeak them (in the ſeaſon and meaſure which is fitteſt for them) unto our *hearts*. Though all Friends turn Enemies, and would deſtroy us, or turn falſe Accuſers, as *Job*'s Friends, in their ignorance or paſſion; though all of them ſhould add affliction to our affliction, yet is our Redeemer and

Juſtifier

Juſtifier ſtill *with us*, and will lay his reſtraining hand upon our Enemies, and ſay to their proudeſt fury [Hitherto and no further ſhall thou go] He is angry with *Job*'s accuſing Friends, notwithſtanding their friendſhip and good meaning, and though they ſeemed to plead for God and Godlineſs againſt *Job*'s ſin: And *who ſhall be againſt us while God is for us? or who ſhall condemn us when it is he that juſtifieth us?* Though we be put to ſay as *David*, Pſal. 142. 4. [*I looked on my right hand and beheld, but there was no man that would know me; refuge failed me; no man cared for my Soul:*] Yet we may ſay with him, *verſ.* 5. and 7. [*I cryed unto thee, O Lord; I ſaid, Thou art my refuge and my Portion in the land of the Living: Bring my Soul out of Priſon that I may praiſe thy Name: The Righteous ſhall compaſs me about: For thou ſhalt deal bountifully with me:* 2, 3. *I poured out my complaint before him; I ſhewed before him my trouble: When my Spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou kneweſt my Path: In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a Snare for me.*] Thus [*God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble.*] Pſal. 46. 1. *Therefore ſhould we*

not

not fear though the Earth were removed, and though the Mountains were carried into the midſt of the Sea; though the Waters thereof roar and be troubled, &c. verſ. 2. 3. Though as *David* ſaith, *Pſal.* 41. 5, 6, 7. [*Mine Enemies ſpeak Evil of me: When ſhall he dye, and his name periſh? And if he come to ſee me, he ſpeaketh vanity: His Heart gathereth Iniquity to it ſelf; when he goeth abroad he telleth it: All that hate me whiſper together againſt me: againſt me do they deviſe my hurt: An evil Diſeaſe, ſay they, cleaveth faſt unto him; and now that he lyeth, he ſhall riſe up no more: Yea, my own familiar friend in whom I truſted, that did eat of my Bread, hath lift up his heel againſt me* ——] Yet we may add a he, *v.* 12. [*And as for me, thou upholdeſt me in mine integrity, and ſetteſt me before thy face forever.*] Though (as *Pſal.* 35. 7, *&c. Without cauſe they have hid for me their Net in a Pit, which without cauſe they have digged for my Soul:* 11. *And falſe Witneſſes did riſe up, they laid to my charge things that I knew not; they rewarded me evil for good:* 15, 16. *In my adverſity they rejoyced, and gathered themſelves together; the objects gathered themſelves together againſt me, and I knew*

it

it not; they did tear and ceaſed not; with hypocritical mockers in Feaſts, they gnaſhed upon me with their teeth: 20. For they ſpeak not peace, but they deviſe deceitful matters againſt them that are quiet in the Land.] Yet *verſe* 9. [*My Soul ſhall be joyful in the Lord; it ſhall rejoyce in his Salvation: 10. All my Bones ſhall ſay, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverеſt the poor from him that is too ſtrong for him, yea the poor and the needy from him that ſpoileth him.*] Though Friends be far off, *the Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart, and ſaveth ſuch as be of a contrite Spirit: Many are the Afflictions of the Righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*] Pſal. 34. 18, 19. *The Lord redeemeth the Soul of his Servants; and none of them that truſt in him ſhall be deſolate.*] v. 22. Therefore [*I will be glad and rejoyce in his Mercy, for he hath conſidered my trouble, and hath known* (and owned) *my Soul in adverſity: and hath not ſhut me in the hand of the Enemy.* — *When my life was ſpent with grief, and my years with ſighing; my ſtrength failed becauſe of mine iniquity, and my Bones were conſumed; I was a reproach among all mine Enemies, but eſpecially among my Neighbours, and*

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a fear to mine Acquaintance; they that did ſee me without fled from me: I was forgotten, and as a dead man out of mind: I was like a broken Veſſel: I heard the ſlander of many: fear was on every ſide; while they took counſel together againſt me, they deviſed to take away my life: But I truſted in thee, O Lord: I ſaid, Thou art my God: my times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that perſecute me: Make thy face to ſhine upon thy Servant: Save me for thy mercies ſake. — O how great is thy goodneſs which thou haſt laid up for them that fear thee, which thou haſt wrought for them that truſt in thee before the Sons of Men! Thou ſhalt hide them in the ſecret of thy preſence from the Pride of Man: Thou ſhalt keep them ſecretly in a pavilion from the ſtrife of Tongues, Pſal. 31.] Thus God is *with us* when men are far from us, or againſt us: His people find by happy experience, that they are *not alone.* Becauſe *he is nigh them, evil ſhall not come nigh them,* unleſs as it worketh for their good. *He is their hiding place to preſerve them from trouble: the great waterfloods ſhall not come nigh them: he will compaſs them about with Songs of deliverance.*] Pſal. 32. 6, 7.

3. And

3. And as *God* is *with us* thus *Relatively* and *Efficiently*, ſo alſo *Objectively* for our holy converſe. Wherever our *Friends* are, God is ſtill at hand to be the moſt profitable, honourable and delightful Object of our thoughts. There is enough in him to take up all the faculties of my ſoul. He that is but in a well furniſhed Library, may find great and excellent employment for his Thoughts many years together: And ſo may he that liveth in the open World, and hath all the viſible Works of God to meditate upon: But all this were nothing, if God were not the *ſenſe* of *Books* and *Creatures*, and the matter of all theſe noble Studies: He that is alone, and hath only God himſelf to ſtudy, hath the *matter* and *ſenſe* of all the Books and Creatures in the World, to employ his thoughts upon. He never need to want matter for his meditation, that hath God to meditate on. He need not want matter of Diſcourſe (whether mental or vocal) that hath God to talk of, though he have not the name of any other Friend to mention. All our Affections may have in him the higheſt and moſt pleaſant work. The Soul of Man cannot have a more ſweet

ſweet and excellent work than to love him: He wanteth neither work nor pleaſure, that in his ſolitude is taken up in the believing contemplations of Eternal Love, and of all his bleſſed Attributes and Works. O then what happy and delightful converſe may a Believer have with God alone! He is always preſent, and always at leiſure to be ſpoken with; and always willing of our acceſs and audience: He hath no intereſt Croſs to our felicity, which ſhould move him to reject us (as worldly great ones often have.) He never miſunderſtandeth us, nor chargeth that upon us which we were never guilty of: If we converſe with *Men*, their *Miſtakes*, and *Intereſts*, and *Paſſions*, and *Inſufficiencies*, do make the trouble ſo great, and the benefit ſo ſmall, that many have become thereby aweary of the World, or of human Society, and have ſpent the reſt of their days alone in deſert places. Indeed, ſo much *of God* as appears in Men, ſo much is their converſe excellent and delightful; and theirs is the beſt that have moſt of God. But there is ſo much of vanity, and ſelf, and fleſh, and ſin in the moſt or all of of us, as very much darkneth our Light, and

and dampeth the pleaſure, and blaſteth the fruit of our Societies and Converſe. O how oft have I been ſolaced in God, when I found nothing but deceit and darkneſs in the World! How oft hath he comforted me, when it was paſt the power of Man! How oft hath he relieved and delivered me, when all the help of Man was vain! It hath been my *Stay* and *Reſt*, to look to him, when the Creature hath been a broken Staff, and deceitful Friends have been but as a broken Tooth, or a Foot that is out of Joint (as *Solomon* ſpeaketh of confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble, *Prov.* 25. 29.) Verily, as the World were but an horrid Dungeon without the Sun, ſo it were a howling wilderneſs, a place of no conſiderable Employment or Delight, were it not that in it we may live to God and do him Service, and ſometime be refreſhed with the light of his countenance, and the communications of his Love. But of this more anon.

Uſe 1. WE ſee our *Example*, and our *Encouragements*. Let us now as *followers of Chriſt*, endeavour to *imitate* him in this, and to *Live upon God, when*

men

men forſake us, and to know that while *God is with us*, we are not alone, nor indeed *forſaken* while he forſakes us not.

I ſhall, 1. Shew you here *Negatively*, what you muſt not do. 2. *Affirmatively*, what you muſt do; for the performance of your duty in this imitation of Chriſt.

1. You muſt not make this any pretence for the undervaluing of your uſeful Friends; nor for your unthankfulneſs for ſo great a Benefit as a Godly Friend: nor for the neglect of your Duty in improving the Company and help of Friends: Two is better then one: The communion of Saints, and help of thoſe that are wiſe and faithful, is a mercy highly to be eſteemed. And the undervaluing of it, is at leaſt a ſign of a declining Soul.

2. You muſt not hence fetch any pretence to ſlight your Friends, and diſoblige them, or neglect any duty that you owe them, or any means therein neceſſary to the continuation of their Friendſhip.

3. You muſt not cauſeleſly withdraw from humane ſociety into *Solitude*. A wearineſs of converſe with Men, is oft conjunct with a wearineſs of our Duty: And a retiring voluntarily into Solitude, when God doth not call or drive us thither,

ther, is oft but a retiring from the place and work which God hath appointed us: And conſequently a retiring rather from God, than to God. Like ſome idle Servants, that think they ſhould not work ſo hard, becauſe it is but *Worldly buſineſs*, and think their Maſters deal not Religiouſly by them, unleſs they let them neglect their labour, that they may ſpend more time in ſerving God: as if it were no ſerving God to be faithful in their Maſters Service.

I deny not but very holy perſons have lived in a ſtate of retirement from humane converſe: In ſuch caſes as theſe it may become a Duty, 1. In caſe of *ſuch perſecution* as at preſent leaveth us no opportunity of ſerving or honouring God ſo much in any other place or ſtate.

2 In caſe that *natural infirmity*, or diſability, or any *other accident* ſhall make one leſs ſerviceable to God and his Church in ſociety than he is in ſolitude.

3. In caſe he hath committed a ſin ſo heinous and of indelible ſcandal and reproach, as that it is not fit for the Servants of Chriſt any more to receive him into their local Communion, though he repent: (For as to *Local Communion*, I think, ſuch a caſe may be.) 4. In

4. In caſe a man through cuſtom and ill company be ſo captivated to ſome fleſhly Luſt, as that he is not able to bear the *temptations* that are *found in humane converſe*; but falleth by them into frequent heinous ſinning: In this caſe the right hand or eye is rather to be parted with, than their Salvation. And though a meer reſtraint by diſtance of temptations and opportunities of ſinning, will not prove a man ſanctified, nor ſave the ſoul that loveth the ſin and fain would live in it; Yet, 1. Grace may ſometime appear in the ſtrength and ſelf denyal which is exerciſed in the very avoiding of temptations, when yet perhaps the perſon hath not ſtrength enough to have ſtood againſt the temptation if it had not been avoided. And 2. The diſtance of temptations, & opportunity of ſerious and frequent conſideration, may be a means to help to ſincerity that want it.

5. In caſe a man by *age* or *ſickneſs* find himſelf ſo *near to death*, as that he hath now a more *ſpecial call* to look after his *preſent actual preparation*, than to endeavour any more the *good of others*; and find withall, that *ſolitude* will help him in his *preparations*, his Society being ſuch as would

would but hinder him. In theſe *five* caſes I ſuppoſe it lawful to retire from humane converſe into *ſolitude*.

But when there is no ſuch neceſſity or call, it uſually proceedeth from one of theſe vicious diſtempers: 1. From *Cowardize* and fear of ſuffering, when the ſouldiers of Chriſt do hide their heads, inſtead of confeſſing him before men.

2. From a lazineſs of mind and wearineſs of duty: when ſlothful unprofitable ſervants hide their talents, pretending their fear of the auſterity of their Lord. Its eaſier to *run away from our work*, then *do it*: and to go out of the reach of ignorance, malice, contradiction and ungodlineſs, than to *encounter them*, and *conquer them* by Truth and Holy lives. So many perſons as we converſe with, ſo many are there to whom we owe ſome duty: And this is not ſo eaſie as it is to over run our work, and to hide our ſelves in ſome Wilderneſs or Cell, whilſt others are fighting the Battels of the Lord. 3. Or it may proceed from meer *impatience*: When men cannot bear the frown, and ſcorns, and violence of the ungodly, they fly from ſufferings, which by patience they ſhould overcome. 4. Or it may come

come from *humour* and *mutability* of mind, and diſcontent with ones condition: Many retire from humane converſe to pleaſe a *diſcontented* paſſionate mind; or expecting to find that privacy, which in publick they could not find, nor is any where to be found on Earth. 5. And ſome do it in *Melancholy*, meerly to pleaſe a *ſick imagination*, which is vexed in company, and a little eaſeth it ſelf in living as the poſſeſſed man among the Tombs. 6. And ſomtimes it proceedeth from *ſelf ignorance*, and an *unhumbled ſtate* of a ſoul: When men think much better of themſelves than others, they think they can more comfortably converſe with *themſelves* than with *others*: Whereas if they well underſtood that they are the *worſt* or *greateſt enemies*, or *troubles* to themſelves, they would more fear their own Company than other mens: They would then conſider what proud, and fleſhly, and worldly, and ſelfiſh, and diſordered hearts they are like to carry with them into their ſolitude, and there to be annoyed with from day to day: And that the *neareſt* enemy is the worſt, and the *neareſt* trouble is the greateſt.

Theſe

Theſe *vices* or *infirmities* carry many into ſolitude; and if they live where Popiſh vanity may ſeduce them, they will perhaps imagine, that they are *ſerving God*, and entring in *perfection*, when they are but *ſinfully* obeying their *corruptions*: and that they are advanced above others in degrees of grace, while they are pleaſing a diſeaſed fancy, and entring into a dangerous courſe of ſin. No doubt but the duties of a publick life are more in number, and greater in weight, and of more excellent conſequence and tendency (even to the moſt publick good, and greateſt honour of God) than the duties of privacy or retirement. *Vir bonus eſt commune bonum*: A good man is a common good. And (ſaith *Seneca*) *Nulla eſſent communia niſi pars illorum pertineret ad ſingulos*] If every one have not ſome ſhare or intereſt in them, how are they common? Let me add theſe few Conſiderations, to ſhew you the evil of *voluntary unneceſſary Solitude.*

1. You leſs contribute to the *honour of your Redeemer*, and leſs promote his Kingdom in the world, and leſs ſubſerve his death and office, while you do good but to few, and live *but almoſt to your ſelves.*

2. You live in the *pooreſt exerciſe* of the grace of *Charity*; and therefore in a low undeſirable condition.

3. You will want the communion of Saints, and benefit of publick ordinances (for I account not a *Colledge* life a *Solitary* life.) And you will want the help of the Charity, Graces and Gifts of others, by which you might be benefited.

4. It will be a life of ſmaller comfort, as it is a life of ſmaller benefit to others. They that do but little good (according to their ability) muſt expect but little comfort. They have uſually moſt peace and comfort to themſelves, that are the moſt profitable to others. [*Non poteſt quiſquam bene degere qui ſe tantum intuetur: Alteri vivas oportet, ſi tibi vis vivere*: Sen.] *No man can live well, that looketh but to himſelf: Thou muſt live to another, if thou wilt live to thy ſelf.*]

O the delight that there is in *doing good to many*! None knoweth it that hath not tryed it: Not upon any account of *Merit*; but as it *Pleaſeth God*, and as *Goodneſs it ſelf* is amiable and ſweet; and as *we receive* by *communicating*; and as we are *under promiſe*; and as Charity makes all the good that's done to *another* to be to us as *our own*!

5. We

5. We are dark and partial, and heedleſs of our ſelves, and hardly brought or kept in acquaintance with our hearts; and therefore have the more need of the eye of others: And even an enemies eye may be uſeful, though malicious; and may do us good while he intends us evil, ſaith *Bernard* [*Malum quod nemo videt nemo arguit: Ubi autem non timetur reprehenſor, ſecurus accedit tenator; licentius perpetratur iniquitas*] [*The evil that none ſeeth, none reproveth: and where the reprover is not feared, the temper cometh more boldly, and the ſin is committed the more licentiouſly.*] It's hard to know the ſpots in our own faces, when we have no *glaſs* or *beholder* to accquaint us with them. Saith *Chryſoſtom* [Solitude is *velamen omnium vitiorum*] the *cover of all vices*] In *company* this cover is laid aſide, and vice being more *naked*, is more *aſhamed*. It is *beholders* that cauſe *ſhame*; which *Solitude* is not acquainted with: And it's a piece of *impenitency not to be ſhamed of ſin.*

6. And we are for the moſt part ſo weak and ſickly, that we are unable to ſubſiſt without the help of others. *Sen. Nemo eſt ex imprudentibus qui relinqui ſibi debet*] *unwiſe men* (or infants, or ſick-like

men) *muſt not be left to themſelves.*] And *God* hath let ſome impotency, inſufficiency and neceſſity upon all that ſhould keep men ſociable, & make them acknowledge their need of others, and be thankful for aſſiſtance from them, and be ready to do good to others, as we would have others do to us. He that *feeleth* not the *need of others*, is ſo unhumbled as to have the greater need of them.

7. *Pride* will have great *advantage* in *private*, and *Repentance* great *diſadvantage*, while our ſins ſeem to be all dead, becauſe there is not a temptation to draw them out, or an obſerver to reprove them. [*Tam diu patiens quiſque ſibi videtur & humilis, donec nullius hominum conſortio commiſcetur; ad naturam priſtinam reverſurus quum interpellaverit cujuſlibet occaſionis commotio, inquit Caſſianus*] *Many a man ſeems to himſelf patient and humble, while he keeps out of company? who would return to his own nature if the commotion of any occaſion did but provoke him.*] It's hard to know what *ſin* or *grace* is in us, if we have not ſuch tryals as are not to be found in Solitude.

8. *Flying from* the obſervation and judgment

judgment of others, is a kind of *ſelf-accuſation*; as if we confeſt our ſelves ſo bad as that we cannot ſtand the tryal of the Light.] *Bona conſcientia turbam advocat: Mala in ſolitudine anxia eſt & ſollicita: ſi honeſta ſunt que facis omnes ſciant: ſiturpia, quid refert neminem ſcire: cum tu ſcias! O te miſerum ſi contemnis hunc teſtem: inquit Seneca.*] That is [*A good conſcience will call in the croud* (or witneſſes, not caring who ſeeth:) *A bad conſcience is anxious and ſollicitous even in ſolitude: If they be things honeſt which thou doeſt, let all men know: If the be diſhoneſt, what good doth it thee that no man elſe knoweth it, when thou knoweſt it thy ſelf! O miſerable man if thou diſpiſe this witneſs!*] Something is ſuſpected to be amiſs with thoſe that are always in their Chambers, and are never ſeen. Tell not men that you cannot bear the light: It is he that doeth evil that hateth the light, leſt his deeds ſhould be reproved.

9. Solitude is *too like to Death*, to be *deſirable*: *He liveth* that *doth good*; and he is *dead* that is *uſeleſs*. [*Vivit is qui multis uſui eſt: Vivit is qui ſentitur: qui vero latitant & torpent, mortem ſuam anteceſſerint, inquit Sen.*] [*He liveth that is profitable to*

many: He liveth that is obſerved or perceived: but they that lye hid and drowſie do anticipate their death.] And it is the moſt culpable *death*, and therefore the worſt, to *have* Life, and not to *uſe it*.

10. A life of *holy Communion* is *likeſt* unto *Heaven*, where none ſhall be ſolitary, but all as members of the Heavenly *Jeruſalem*, ſhall in harmony Love and Praiſe their Maker.

Theſe Reaſons ſeem to me ſufficient to ſatiſie you that no man ſhould *chooſe a Solitude without a ſpecial neceſſity or call:* nor yet ſhould it be taken for a life of *greater perfection*, then a *faithful ſerving of God on publick, and doing good to more*.

I Shall now come to the *Affirmative*, and tell you for all this, that [*If God call us into Solitude, or men forſake us, we may rejoice in this, that we are not alone, but the Father is with us.*] *Fear not* ſuch *Solitude*, but be ready to improve it, if you be caſt upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Chriſt, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for Solitude, and need not fear if all the World ſhould caſt you off. If you be baniſhed, impriſoned

impriſoned, or left alone, it is but a Relaxation from your greateſt labours; which though you may not caſt off your ſelves, you may lawfully be ſenſible of your eaſe, if God take off your Burden. It is but a ceſſation from your ſharpeſt conflicts, and removal from a multitude of great Temptations. And though you may not cowardly retreat or ſhift your ſelves from the Fight and danger, yet if God will diſpenſe with you, and let you live in greater peace and ſafety, you have no cauſe to murmur at his dealing. A Fruit Tree that groweth by the high-way ſide, doth ſeldom keep its fruit to ripeneſs, while ſo many Paſſengers have each his ſtone or Cudgel to caſt at it: *Seneca* could ſay [*Nunquam a turba mores quos extuli refero: Aliquid ex eo quod compoſui turbatur; aliquid ex his quæ fugavi redit: Inimica eſt multorum converſatio*] *I never bring home well from a Crowd the manners which I took out with me: Something is diſordered of that which I had ſet in order: Something of that which I had baniſhed doth return: The converſation of many I find an enemy to me.*] O how many vain and fooliſh words corrupt the minds of thoſe that converſe with an ungodly World,

when your Ears and Minds who live in Solitude, are free from ſuch Temptations! You live not in ſo corrupt an Air as they: You hear not the filthy ribbald Speeches, which fight againſt modeſty and chaſtity, and are the bellows of Luſt: You hear not the diſcontented complaining words of the impatient; nor the paſſionate provoking words of the offended; nor the wrangling quarrelſom words of the contentious; nor the cenſorious, or ſlanderous, or reproachful words of the malicious, who think it their intereſt to have their Brethren taken to be bad, and to have others hate them, becauſe they themſelves hate them; and who are as zealous to quench the Charity of others, when it is deſtroyed in themſelves, as holy perſons are zealous to provoke others to Love, which dwelleth and ruleth in themſelves. In your Solitude with God, you ſhall not hear the lyes and malicious revilings of the ungodly againſt the generation of the juſt: Nor the ſubtile cheating words of Hereticks, who being themſelves deceived, would deceive others of their Faith, and corrupt their lives. You ſhall not there be diſtracted with the noiſe and clamours of contending uncharitable profeſſors

ſeſſors of Religion, endeavouring to make odious firſt the Opinions, and then the perſons of one another: one ſaying, here is the Church, and another, there is the Church: One ſaying, This is the true Church Government, and another ſaying Nay, but that is it: One ſaying, God will be worſhipped thus, and another, not ſo, but thus or thus: You ſhall not there be drawn to ſide with one againſt another, nor to joyn with any faction, or be guilty of diviſions: You ſhall not be troubled with the Oaths and Blaſphemies of the wicked, nor with the imprudent miſcarriages of the Weak; with the Perſecutions of Enemies, or the falling out of Friends. You ſhall not ſee the cruelty of proud Oppreſſors, that ſet up lyes by armed violence, and care not what they ſay or do, nor how much other men are injured or ſuffer, ſo that themſelves may tyrannize, and their wills and words may rule the World, when they do ſo unhappily rule themſelves. In your ſolitude with God, you ſhall not ſee the proſperity of the wicked to move you to envy, nor the adverſity of the juſt to be your grief: You ſhall ſee no Worldly pomp and ſplendor to befool you; nor adorn-

ed beauty to entice you, nor waſting ca lamities to afflict you: You ſhall not hear the laughter of Fools, nor the ſick mans groans, nor the wronged mans Complaints, nor the poor mans murmurings, nor the proud mans boaſtings, nor the angry mans abuſive ragings. As you loſe the help of your gracious friends, ſo you are freed from the fruits of their peeviſhneſs and paſſions; of their differing opinion and ways and tempers; of their inequality, unſuitableneſs, and contrariety of minds or intereſts; of their levity and unconſtancy, and the powerful temptations of their friendſhip, to draw you to the errors or other ſins which they are tainted with themſelves. In a word, you are there half delivered from the VANITY and VEXATION of the world; and were it not that you are yet undelivered from *your ſelves*, and that you take diſtempered corrupted hearts with you, O what a felicity would your ſolitude be! But, alas, we cannot overrun our own diſeaſes, we muſt carry with us the remnants of our corrupted nature; our deadneſs, and dulneſs, our ſelfiſhneſs and earthly minds, our impatience and diſcontents; and worſt of all,

our lamentable weakness of faith and love and heavenly mindedness, and our strangeness to God, and backwardness to the matters of eternal life. O that I could escape these, though I were in the hands of the cruellest enemies! O that such a heart could be left behind! How gladly would I overrun both house, and land, and honour, and all sensual delights, that I might but overrun it! O where is the place where there is none of this darkness, nor disaffection, nor distance, nor estrangedness from God! O that I knew it! O that I could find it! O that I might there dwell! though I should never more see the face of mortals; nor ever hear a human Voice, nor ever taste of the delights of flesh! Alas, foolish Soul: such a place there is, that hath all this, and more than this: But it is not in a Wilderness, but in Paradise, not here on Earth, but above with Christ! And yet am I so loath to die? yet am I no more desirous of the blessed day, when I shall be uncloathed of flesh and sin? O death, what an Enemy art thou even to my Soul! By affrighting me from the presence of my Lord, and hindring my desires and willingness to be gone, thou wrongest me much

much more, than by laying my fleſh to rot in darkneſs. Fain I would know God, and fain I would more love him and enjoy him: But O this hurtful love of life! O this unreaſonable fear of dying, detaineth my deſires from preſſing on to the happy place where all this may be had! O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from this body of death! this carnal unbelieving heart, that ſometime can think more delightfully of a *Wilderneſs* then of *Heaven*; that can go ſeek after God in deſert ſolitude, among the Birds and Beaſts and Trees, and yet is ſo backward to be looſed from fleſh that I may find him and enjoy him in the World of glory: Can I expect that Heaven come down to Earth! and that the Lord of glory ſhould remove his Court, and either leave the retinue of his Celeſtial Courtiers, or bring them all down into this droſſy World of fleſh and ſin, and this to ſatisfie my fleſhly fooliſh mind! Or can I expect the tranſlation of *Henoch* or the Chariot of *Elias*? Is it not enough that my Lord hath conquered Death, and ſanctifyed the paſſage, and prepared the place of my perpetual abode.

Well! for all this, though a *Wilderneſs*

is

is *not Heaven*, it ſhall be ſweet and welcom for the *ſake* of Heaven, if *thence* I may but have a clearer proſpect of it: and if by retiring from the crowd and noiſe of Folly, I may but be more compoſed and better diſpoſed to converſe above, and to uſe my Faith (alas, my too weak languid Faith) until the beatifical Viſion and Fruition come. If there may be but more of God, or readier acceſs to him, or more heart quickning flames of Love, or more heart-comforting intimations of his Favour, in a wilderneſs than in a City, in a Priſon than in a Palace; let that Wilderneſs be my City, and let that Priſon be my Palace, while I muſt abide on Earth. If in ſolitude I may have *Henochs* walk with God, I ſhall in due ſeaſon have ſuch a tranſlation as ſhall bring me to the ſame felicity which he enjoyeth: And in the mean time as well as after, it is no incommodity, if by mortal eyes I be ſeen no more. If the Chariot of contemplation will in ſolitude raiſe me to more believing affectionate converſe with Heaven, than I could expect in Tumults and Temptations, it ſhall reconcile me unto ſolitude, and make it my Paradiſe on Earth, till Angels inſtead

inſtead of the Chariot of *Elias*, ſhall convey me to the preſence of my glorified Head, in the Celeſtial Paradiſe.

Object. *But it is grievous to one that hath been uſed to much company, to be alone.*

Anſw. Company may ſo uſe you, that it may be more grievous to you *not* to be alone. The Society of Waſps and Serpents may be ſpared; and Bees themſelves have ſuch Stings as make ſome that have felt them think they bought the hony dear.

But can you ſay, you are *alone*, while you are *with God?* Is his preſence nothing to you? Doth it not ſignifie more than the company of all Men in the world? Saith *Hierom*, [*Sapiens nunquam ſolus eſſe poteſt: habet enim ſecum omnes qui ſunt, & qui fuerunt boni — & ſi hominum ſit inopia, loquitur cum Deo*] viz. *A wiſe man cannot be alone: for he hath with him the good men that are or have been — And if there be a want of men, he ſpeaks with God.*] He ſhould rather have ſaid, *There can be no want of man, when we may ſpeak with God:* And were it not that God is here revealed to us as in a glaſs, and that we do converſe with God in Man, we ſhould think human converſe little worth.

Object.

Object. *O but Solitude is diſconſolate to a ſociable Mind.*

Anſw. But the moſt *deſirable Society* is *no Solitude:* Saith *Hierom,* [*Infinita eremi vaſtitas te terret? ſed tu Paradiſum mente deambula: Quotieſcunque cogitatione ac mente illuc conſcenderis, toties in eremo non eris*] that is [*Doth the infinite vaſtneſs of the wilderneſs terrifie thee? But do thou (aſcend) in mind and walk in Paradiſe: As oft as thou aſcendeſt thither in thought and mind, ſo oft thou ſhalt not be in the wilderneſs.*] If *God* be *nothing* to thee, thou art not a *Chriſtian* but an *Atheiſt.* If *God* be *God* to thee, he is *All in all to thee*; and then ſhould not his preſence be inſtead of all? O that I might get one ſtep nearer unto God, though I receded many from all the world! O that I could find that place on Earth where a Soul may have neareſt acceſs unto him, and fulleſt knowledge and enjoyment of him, though I never more ſaw the face of Friends! I ſhould chearfully lay with my bleſſed Saviour [*I am not alone, for the Father is with me.*] And I ſhould ſay ſo for theſe Reaſons following.

1. *If God be with me, the Maker, and Ruler,*

Ruler, and Diſpoſer of all is with me: ſo that all things are *virtually* with me in him. I have that in Gold and Jewels which I ſeem to want in Silver, Lead, and Droſs. I can want no Friend if God vouchſafe to be my Friend; and I can enjoy no benefit by all my Friends, if God be my Enemy. I need not fear the greateſt Enemies, if God be reconciled to me. I ſhall not miſs the light of the Candle, if I have this bleſſed Sun. The Creature *is nothing* but what it is *from* God, and *in* God: And it is worth nothing, or good for nothing, but what it's worth in order unto God, as it declareth him, and helps the Soul to know him, ſerve him, or draw nearer to him: As it is Idolatry in the unhappy worldling, to thirſt after the Creature with the neglect of God, and ſo to make the world his God; ſo doth it ſavour of the ſame hainous ſin to lament our loſs of Creatures more than the diſpleaſure of God. If God be my Enemy, or I am fallen under his indignation, I have then ſo much greater matters to lament than the loſs, or abſence, or frowns of Man, as ſhould almoſt make me forget that there is ſuch a thing as man to be regarded: But if God be my Father, and my Friend in Chriſt,

Chriſt, I have then ſo much to think of with delight, and to recreate and content my Soul, as will proclaim it moſt incongruous and abſurd to lament inordinately the abſence of a worm, while I have his Love and Preſence who is All in All. If God cannot content me, and be not enough for me, how is he then my God? or how ſhall he be my Heaven and everlaſting Happineſs?

2. If God be with me, he is with me to whom I am abſolutely devoted. I am wholly his, and have acknow'edged his intereſt in me, and long ago diſclaimed all Uſurpers, and repented of Alienations, and unreſervedly reſigned my ſelf to him: And where ſhould I dwell but with him that is my owner, and with whom I have made the ſolemneſt Covenant that ever I made? I never gave my ſelf to any other, but in ſubordination to him, and with a *ſalvo* for his higheſt inviolable right. Where ſhould my goods be but in my own houſe? With whom ſhould a *ſervant* dwell but with his Maſter? and a Wife, but with her Husband? and Children but with their Father? I am nearlier related to my God and to my Saviour, than I am to any of my Relations in this

this world. I owe more to him than to all the World: I have renounced all the World, as they ſtand in any competition or compariſon with him; and can I want *their* company then while I am *with him?* How ſhall I *hate* Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, and Brother and Siſter for his ſake, if I cannot *ſpare them*, or be without them to enjoy him? To *hate* them is but to *uſe* them as Men do *hated things*, that is, to caſt them away with contempt as they would alienate me from Chriſt, and to cleave to him, and be ſatisfied in him alone. I am now married to Chriſt, and therefore muſt chearfully leave Father and Mother, and my native place, and all to cleave to him: And with whom ſhould I now delight to dwell, but with him who hath taken me into ſo near relation, to be, as it were, one Fleſh with him! O my dear Lord, hide not *thou* thy face from an unkind an unworthy ſinner! Let me but dwell with thee and ſee thy face, and feel the gracious embracements of thy Love, and then let me be caſt off by all the world, if thou ſee it meeteſt for me; or let all other friends be where they will, ſo that my Soul may be with thee:

I have

I have agreed for thy ſake to forſake all, even the deareſt that ſhall ſtand againſt thee; and I reſolve by thy grace to ſtand to this Agreement.

3. *If God be with me, I am not alone, for he is with me that loveth me beſt.*] The Love of all the Friends on Earth is nothing to his Love. O how plainly hath he declared that he loveth me, in the ſtrange condeſcention, the Sufferings, Death, and Interceſſion of his Son? What Love hath he declared in the communications of his Spirit, and the operations of his Grace, and the near Relations into which he brought me? What Love hath he declared in the courſe of his Providences? In many and wonderful preſervations and deliverances? In the conduct of his Wiſdom, and in a Life of Mercies? What Love appeareth in his precious Promiſes, and the glorious Proviſions he hath made for me with himſelf to all eternity? O my Lord, I am aſhamed that thy Love is ſo much loſt; that it hath no better return from an unkind unthankful heart; that I am not more delighted in thee, and ſwallowed up in the contemplation of thy Love; I can contentedly let go the Society and converſe of all others,

others, for the converſe of ſome one boſom Friend, that is dearer to me than they all, as *Jonathan* to *David*: And can I not much more be ſatisfied in thee alone, and let go all if I may continue with thee? My very Dog will gladly forſake all the Town, and all Perſons in the world, to follow me alone! And have I not yet found ſo much Love and Goodneſs in thee my dear and bleſſed God, as to be willing to converſe alone with thee? All men delight moſt in the company of thoſe that love them beſt: They chooſe not to converſe with the *Multitude* when they look for ſolace and content, but with their deareſt Friends: And ſhould any be ſo dear to me as God? O were not thy Love unworthily neglected by an unthankful heart, I ſhould never be ſo unſatisfied in thee, but ſhould take up, or ſeek my comforts in thee: I ſhould then ſay, Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none on Earth that I deſire beſides thee! Though not only my Friends, but my Fleſh and Heart themſelves ſhould fail me, it is thou that will ſtill be the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion forever: it is good therefore for me to draw near to thee, how

how far ſoever I am from Man: O let me there dwell where thou wilt not be ſtrange, for thy loving kindneſs is better than Life. Inſtead of the multitude of my turmoiling thoughts, let me be taken up in the believing views of thy reconciled Face, and in the glad Attendance upon thy Grace; or at leaſt in the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy celeſtial comforts delight my ſoul. Let me dwell as in thy Family; and when I awake, let me be ſtill with thee! Let me go no whither but where I am ſtill following thee: Let me do nothing but thy work, nor ſerve any other but when I may truly call it a ſerving thee: Let me hear nothing but thy voice, and let me know thy voice by whatever inſtrument thou ſhalt ſpeak: Let me never ſee any thing but thy ſelf and the glaſs that repreſenteth thee, and the Books in in which I may read thy Name: And let me never play with the out-ſide, and gaze on Words and Letters as inſignificant, and not obſerve thy Name which is the ſenſe. Whether it be in company or in ſolitude, let me be continually with thee, and do thou vouchſafe to hold me by my right hand: And guide me with thy

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thy counſel, and afterwards receive me unto thy Glory, *Pſal.* 73. 23, 24, 25, 26, 28. *Pſal.* 63. 3.

4. If God be with me I am not alone; for *I ſhall be with him whoſe Love is of greater uſe and benefit to me, than the love of all my Friends in the world. Their Love* may perhaps be ſome little comfort, as it floweth from *His:* But it is *His Love* by which and upon which I Live. It is His Love that gives me *Life* and *Time*, and *Health* and *Food*, and *Preſervation*; that gives me Books, gives me books and giveth me underſtanding: that giveth me proviſion, and ſaveth me from turning it to pernicious fleſhlineſs and exceſs; that giveth me even my friends themſelves, and ſaveth me from that abuſe which might make them to me worſe than enemies. The Sun, the Earth, the Air is not ſo uſeful or needful to me as his Love. The Love of all my friends cannot make me well when I am ſick: It cannot forgive the ſmalleſt of my ſins; nor yet aſſure me of Gods forgiveneſs: It cannot heal the maladies of my ſoul, nor give a ſolid laſting peace to the conſcience which is troubled: If all my friends ſtand about me when I am dying, they cannot take

take away the fears of death, nor ſecure my paſſage to everlaſting life: Death will be Death ſtill, and danger will be danger, when all my friends have done their beſt. But my Almighty friend is Allſufficient: He can prevent my ſickneſs, or rebuke and cure it, or make it ſo good to me, that I ſhall thank him for it: He can blot out my tranſgreſſions, and forgive all my ſin; and juſtifie me when the world and my conſcience do condemn me: He can teach me to believe, to repent, to pray, to hope, to ſuffer, and to overcome: He can quiet my ſoul in the midſt of trouble, and give me a well grounded everlaſting peace, and a joy which no man can take from me. He can deliver me from all the corruptions and diſtempers of my froward heart; and eaſe me and ſecure me in the troubleſom war which is daily managed in my breaſt. He can make it as eaſie a thing to dye, as to lye down and take my reſt when I am weary, or to undreſs me at night and go to bed. He can teach Death to lay by its terrible aſpect, and to ſpeak with a mild and comfortable voice, & to bring me the joyfulleſt tydings that ever came unto my ears; and to preach to me the laſt and ſweeteſt Ser-

mon,

us up to the bleſſed delightful ſociety and converſe which in the heavenly *Jeruſalem* we ſhall have with Chriſt.

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And is this the difference between the *Love of man* and of *God*? And yet do I lament the *loss of man*! And yet am I so backward to converse with God, and to be satisfied in his Love alone! Ah my God, how justly mayest thou withhold that Love which I thus undervalue; and refuse that converse which I have first refused? and turn me over to man, to silly man, to sinful man, whose converse I so much desire, till I have learnt by dear experience the difference between man and God, and between an Earthly and an Heavenly friend! Alas, have I not tryed it oft enough, to have known it better before this day! Have I not often enough found what man is in a time of tryal! Have I not been told it over and over, and told it to the quick, by deceitful friends, by self-seeking friends, by mutable, erroneous, deceived, scandalous, backsliding friends, by proud and selfconceited friends; by passionate, quarrelsom, vexatious friends, by selfgrieved, troubled friends, that have but brought

brought me all their calamities and griefs to be additions to my own; by tempting friends, that have drawn me to ſin more effectually than enemies; by tender, faithful, but unable friends, that have but fetcht fire from my calamities and ſorrows to kindle their own, not equally ſharing, but each one taking all my trouble entirely to himſelf: that have been *willing*, but *inſufficient* to relieve me; and therefore the greater was their Love, the greater was their *own*, and conſequently *mine* affliction, that would have been with me, but could not; that would fain have eaſed my pain, and ſtrengthened my languiſhing body, but could not; that would fain have removed all my troubles, and comforted my caſt down mind, but could not. O how often have I found that humane friendſhip is a ſweet deſired addition to our woe; a beloved calamity, and an affliction which nature will not be without, not becauſe it *Loveth evil*, nor becauſe it is *wholly deceived* in its *choice* (for there is *Good* in *friendſhip*, and *delight* in holy *Love*) but becauſe the *Good* which is here accompanied with ſo *much evil*, is the beginning of a more high and durable friendſhip, and pointeth

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by him draw near to God: And ceaſe from man whoſe breath is in his noſtrils: Love God in his Saints, and delightfully converſe with Chriſt in them, while thou haſt opportunity. But Remember thou Liveſt not upon them, or on their Love, but upon God, and therefore deſire *their Company* but for *His*: And if thou have *His*, be content if thou have not *theirs*.

He wants not man that enjoyeth God. Gather up all the Love, and Thoughts, and Deſires which have been ſcattered and loſt upon the Creatures, and ſet them all on God himſelf, and preſs into his preſence, and converſe with him, and thou ſhalt find the miſtake of thy preſent diſcontents, and ſweet experience ſhall tell thee thou haſt made a happy change.

5. *If God be with me, I am not alone, becauſe he is with me with whom my greateſt buſineſs lyeth*: And what company ſhould I deſire, but theirs with whom I have my daily neceſſary work to do? I have more to do with God, than with all the World: Yea more and greater buſineſs with him in one day, than with all the World in all my life. I have buſineſs with man about houſe, or lands, or food,

or raiment, or labour, or journying, or Recreations, about ſociety and publick peace: But what are theſe to my buſineſs with God! Indeed with holy men I have holy Buſineſs; but that is but as they are Meſſengers from God, and come to me on his buſineſs, and ſo they muſt be dearly welcome: But even then my buſineſs is much more with God then with them; with him that ſent them, then with the Meſſenger. Indeed my buſineſs with God is ſo great, that If I had not a Mediator to encourage and aſſiſt me, to do my work and procure me acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my Soul.

O therefore my Soul, let man ſtand by: It is the Eternal God that I have to do with: And with whom am I to tranſact in this little time the buſineſs of my endleſs life. I have to deal with God through Chriſt, for the pardon of my ſins, of all my great and grievous ſins; and wo to me if I ſpeed not, that ever I was born: I have ſome hopes of pardon, but intermixt with many perplexing fears: I have evidences much blotted, and not eaſily underſtood: I want aſſurance that he is indeed my Father, and reconciled to me,

and will receive me to himſelf when the World forſaketh me: I have many languiſhing graces to be ſtrengthened; and alas, what radicated, obſtinate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into ſuch an unbelieving, dead, and earthly heart, into ſuch a proud and peeviſh and diſordered heart, into ſuch a trembling, perplexed, ſelf-accuſing heart, and yet not underſtand how great my buſineſs is with God! Can I peruſe my ſins, or feel my wants, and ſink under my weakneſſes, and yet not diſcern how great my buſineſs is with God! Can I look back upon all the time that I have loſt, and all the grace that I unthankfully reſiſted, and all the mercies that I trod under foot, or fool'd away, and can I look before me and ſee how near my time is to an end, and yet not underſtand how great my buſineſs is with God; Can I think of the malice and diligence of Satan, the number, power and ſubtilty of mine Enemies, the many ſnares and dangers that are ſtill before me, the ſtrength and number of temptations, and my ignorance, unwatchfulneſs and weakneſs to reſiſt, and yet not know that my greateſt buſineſs is with God: Can I feel

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my afflictions and lament them, and think my burden greater than I can bear, and find that man cannot relieve me; can I go mourning in the heavineſs of my ſoul, and water my Bed with Tears, and fill the air with my groans and lamentations, or feel my ſoul overwhelmed within me, ſo that my words are intercepted, and I am readier to break than ſpeak, and yet not perceive that my greateſt buſineſs is with God? Can I think of dying? Can I draw near to judgment? Can I think of everlaſting joys in Heaven? and of everlaſting pains in Hell, and yet not feel that my greateſt buſineſs is with God? O then, my ſoul, the caſe is eaſily reſolved, with whom it is that thou muſt moſt deſirouſly and ſeriouſly converſe. Where ſhouldſt thou be but where thy buſineſs is, and ſo great buſineſs! Alas, what have I to do with man! what can it do but make my head ake, to hear a deal of ſenſeleſs chat, about preferments, lands and dignities, about the words and thoughts of Men, and a thouſand toys that are utterly impertinent to my great imployments, and ſignifie nothing but that the dreaming world is not awake! What pleaſure is it to ſee the buſles of a Bedlam

world? what a ſtir they make to *preve* or *make* themſelves unhappy? How low and of how little weight, are the learned diſcourſes about ſyllables and words, and names and notions, and mood and figure, yea, or about the higheſt Planets, when all are not referred unto God? Were it not that ſome converſe with men, doth further my converſe with God; and that God did tranſact much of his buſineſs by his meſſengers and ſervants, it were no matter whether ever I more ſaw the face of man: were it not that my Maſter hath placed me in ſociety, and appointed me and much of my *work for* others, and *with* others, and much of his *mercy* is conveyed *by* others, man might ſtand by, and ſolitude were better then the beſt ſociety, and God alone ſhould take me up. O nothing is ſo much my miſery and ſhame, as that I am no more willing, nor better skilled in the management of my great important buſineſs! That my work is with God, and my heart is no more with him! O what might I do in holy meditation or Prayer one hour; if I were as ready for prayer, and as good at prayer as one that hath ſo long opportunity and ſo great neceſſity to converſe with God,

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ſhould be! A prayerleſs heart, a heart that flyeth away from God, is moſt excuſable in ſuch a one as I, that hath ſo much important buſineſs with him: It is work that muſt be done; and if well done, will never be repented of: I uſe not to return from the preſence of God (when indeed I have drawn near him) as I do from the company of empty men, repenting that I have loſt my time, and trembled that my mind is diſcompoſed or depreſſed by the vanity and earthly ſavour of their diſcourſe: I oft repent that I have prayed to him ſo *coldly*, and converſed with him ſo *negligently*, and ſerved him ſo *remiſly*; but I never repent of the *time*, the *cares*, the *afflictions*, or the *diligence* imployed in his holy work. Many a time I have repented that ever I ſpent ſo much time with *man*, and wiſht I had never ſeen the faces of ſome that are eminent in the world, whoſe favour and converſe others are ambitious of: But it is my greif and ſhame that ſo ſmall a part of all my life, hath been ſpent with God; and that fervent prayer and heavenly contemplations, have been ſo ſeldom and ſo ſhort. O that I had lived more with God, though I had been leſs with my deareſt of

my friends! How much more blameleſs, regular and pure! How much more fruitful, and anſwerable to my obligations and profeſſions! How much more comfortable to my review! How many falls, and hurts, and wounds, and greifs, and groans might I have eſcaped! O how much more pleaſing is it *now* to my Remembrance, to think of the hours in which I have lain at the feet of God, though it were in tears and groans, than to think of the time which I have ſpent in any common converſe with the greateſt, or the learneded, or the deareſt of my acquaintance!

And as my *Greateſt buſineſs* is with God, ſo my *daily buſineſs* is alſo with him: He purpoſely leaveth me under wants, and ſuffers neceſſities daily to return, and enemies to aſſault me, and affliction to ſurprize me, that I may be daily driven to him: He loveth to hear from me: He would have me be no ſtranger with him: I have buſineſs with him every hour: I need not want employment for all the faculties of my Soul, if I know what it is to converſe in Heaven. Even Prayer, and every holy thought of God, hath an Object ſo great and excellent, as ſhould wholly take

take me up. Nothing muſt be thought or ſpoken lightly about the Lord. His Name muſt not be taken in vain: Nothing that is common beſeemeth his Worſhipers. He will be ſanctified of all that ſhall draw near him: He muſt be loved with all the Heart and Might. His Servants need not be wearied for want of employment, nor through the lightneſs or unprofitableneſs of their employment: If I had Cities to build, or Kingdoms to govern, I might better complain for want of Employment for the Faculties of my Soul, than I can when I am to converſe in Heaven. In other Studies the delight abateth, when I have reached my deſire, and know all that I can know: But in God there is infinitely more to be known, when I know the moſt. I am never *ſatiated* with the *eaſineſs* of knowing, nor are my deſires *abated* by any *unuſefulneſs* or *unworthineſs* in the Object; but I am drawn to it by it's higheſt Excellencies, and drawn on to deſire more and more by the infiniteneſs of the Light which I have not yet beheld, and the infiniteneſs of the Good which yet I have not enjoyed. If I be idle, or ſeem to want

want employment, when I am to contemplate all the Attributes, Relations, Mercies, Works, and revealed perfections of the Lord, it's ſure for want of Eyes to ſee, or a Heart enclined to my buſineſs: If God be not enough to employ my Soul, then all the Perſons and Things on Earth are not enough.

And when I have *Infinite Goodneſs* to delight in, where my Soul may freely let out it ſelf, and never need to fear exceſs of Love; how ſweet ſhould this employment be? As *Knowledge*, ſo *love* is never ſtinted here, by the narrowneſs of the Object: can never love him in any proportion either to his Goodneſs and amiableneſs in himſelf, or to his Love to us. What need have I then of any other company or buſineſs, when I have infinite Goodneſs to delight in, and to Love (further than they ſubſerve this greateſt Work?)

Come home then, O my Soul, to God: Converſe in Heaven: Turn away thine eyes from beholding Vanity: Let not thy affections kindle upon ſtraw or bryars, that go out when they have made a flaſh or noiſe, and leave thee to thy cold and darkneſs: But come and dwell upon celeſtial beauties, and make it thy daily and

and moſt diligent Work, to kindle thy affections on the infinite everlaſting Good; and then they will never be extinguiſhed or decay for want of Fewel; but the further they go, and the longer they burn, the greater will be the Flame. Though thou find it hard while Love is but a Spark to make it burn, and complain that thy cold and backward heart is hardly warmed with the love of God, yet when the whole pile hath taken fire, and the flame aſcendeth, fire will breed fire, Love will cauſe Love; and all the malice of Hell it ſelf ſhall never be able to ſuppreſs or quench it unto all Eternity.

6. And it is a great Encouragement to my converſe with God, that no miſunderſtanding, no malice of Enemies, no former ſin or preſent frailty, no, nor the infinite diſtance of the moſt holy glorious God, can hinder my acceſs to him, or turn away his Ear or Love, or interrupt my leave and liberty of converſe. If I converſe with the poor, their wants afflict me, being greater than I can ſupply: Their complaints and expectations which I cannot ſatisfie, are my trouble. If I would converſe with Great ones, it is not eaſie to get acceſs: and leſs eaſie

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to have their Favour, unleſs I would purchaſe it at too dear a rate: How ſtrangely and contemptuouſly do they look at their inferiours! Great Friends muſt be made for a word or Smile: And if you be not quickly gone, they are aweary of you: And if you ſeek any thing of them, or would put them to any coſt or trouble, you are as welcom to them as ſo many Vermin or noiſom Creatures. They pleaſe them beſt that drive you away. With how much labour and difficulty muſt you clime, if you will ſee the top of one of theſe Mountains? And when you are there, you are but in a place of barrenneſs; and have nothing to ſatisfie you for your pains, but a larger proſpect and vertiginous deſpect of the lower grounds which are not your own: It is ſeldom that theſe Great Ones are to be ſpoken with: And perhaps their Speech is but a denyal of your Requeſts, if not ſome ſnappiſh and contemptuous Rejection, that makes you glad when you are got far enough from them, and makes you the better like and love the acceſſible calm & fruitful Plains.

But, O how much greater encouragements hath my Soul to converſe with God!

God! Company never hindereth him from harkning to my Suit: He is Infinite and Omnipotent, and as ſufficient for every individual Soul, as if he had no other to look after in the World: When he is taken up with the attendance and praiſes of his heavenly Hoſt, he is as free and ready to attend and anſwer the groans and prayers of a contrite Soul, as if he had no nobler Creatures, nor no higher Service to regard. I am oft unready, but God is never unready: I am unready to pray, but he is not unready to hear: I am unready to come to God, to walk with him, and to ſolace my Soul with him; but he is never unready to entertain me. Many a time my Conſcience would have driven me away, when he hath called me to him, and rebuked my accuſing fearful Conſcience. Many a time I have called my ſelf a Prodigal, a companion of Swine, a miſerable hard-hearted Sinner, unworthy to be called his Son, when he hath called me *Child*, and chid me for my queſtioning his Love. He hath readily forgiven the Sins which I thought would have made my Soul fuel of Hell: He hath entertained me with Joy, with

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Muſick and a Feaſt, when I better deſerved to have been among the Dogs without his Doors. He hath embraced me in his ſuſtaining conſolatory Arms, when he might have ſpurned my guilty Soul to Hell, and ſaid, Depart from me, thou worker of Iniquity, I know thee not. O little did I think, that he could ever have forgotten the Vanity and Villany of my Youth; yea, ſo *eaſily* have forgotten my moſt aggravated ſins. When I had ſinned againſt Light; when I had reſiſted Conſcience; when I had frequently and wilfully injured Love, I thought he would never have forgotten it: But the greatneſs of his Love and Mercy, and the blood and interceſſion of his Son, hath cancelled all. O how many Mercies have I taſted ſince I thought I had ſinned away all Mercies! How patiently hath he born with me, ſince I thought he would never have put up more? And yet beſides my ſins and the withdrawings of my own heart, there hath been nothing to interrupt our converſe. Though he be God, and I a worm, yet that would not have kept me out: Though he be in Heaven, yet he is near to ſuccour

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me on Earth, in all that I call upon him for: Though he have the praiſe of Angels, he diſdaineth not my Tears and Groans: Though he have the perfect Love of perfect Souls, he knoweth the little Spark in my Breaſt, and deſpiſeth not my weak and languid Love: Though I injure and diſhonour him by loving him no more; though I oft forget him, and have been out of the way when he hath come or called me; though I have diſobediently turned away mine ears, and unkindly refuſed the entertainments of his Love, and unfaithfully plaid with thoſe whoſe company he forbad me, he hath not divorced me, nor turned me out of doors. O wonderful! that Heaven will be familiar with Earth! and God with Man! the Higheſt with a Worm! and the moſt Holy with an unconſtant Sinner! Man refuſeth me, when God will entertain me: Man, that is no wiſer or better than my ſelf. Thoſe that I never wronged or deſerved ill off, reject me with Reproach: And God whom I have unſpeakably injured, doth invite me, and intreat me, and condeſcendeth to me, as if he were beholden to me to be ſaved: Men that I have

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deſerved well of, do abhor me: And God that I have deſerved Hell of, doth accept me. The beſt of them are Briars, and as a thorny Hedge, and he is Love, and Reſt, and Joy: And yet I can be more welcom to him, though I have offended him, than I can to them whom I have obliged: I have freer leave to caſt my ſelf into my Fathers Arms, than to tumble in thoſe Briars, or wallow in the Dirt. I upbraid my ſelf with my ſins, but he doth not upbraid me with them. I condemn my ſelf for them, but he condemns me not: He forgiveth me ſooner than I can forgive my ſelf: I have peace with him, before I can have peace of Conſcience.

O therefore my Soul, draw near to him that is ſo willing of thy company! That frowneth thee not away, unleſs it be when thou haſt fallen into the dirt, that thou mayſt waſh thee from thy filthineſs, and the fitter for his converſe. Draw near to him that will not wrong thee, by believing miſreports of Enemies, or laying to thy charge the things thou knoweſt not: but will forgive the Wrongs thou haſt done to him, and juſtifie thee from the ſin, that Conſcience layeth

layeth to thy charge. Come to him that by his Word and Spirit, his Miniſters and Mercies calleth thee to come; and hath promiſed, that thoſe that come to him, he will in no wiſe ſhut out. O walk with him that will bear thee up, and lead thee as by the right hand (*Pſal.* 73. 23.) and carry his Infants when they cannot go! O ſpeak to him that teacheth thee to ſpeak, and underſtandeth and accepts thy Stammering; and helpeth thine Infirmities when thou knoweſt not what to pray for as thou oughteſt; and giveth thee *Groans* when thou haſt not *words, and knoweth the meaning of his Spirit in thy Groans*: that cannot be *contained in the Heaven of Heavens*, and yet hath reſpect to the *contrite Soul*, that trembleth at his word, and feareth his diſpleaſure: That pityeth the Tears, and deſpiſeth not the ſighing of a broken heart, nor the deſires of the ſorrowful. O walk with him that is never weary of the converſe of an upright Soul! That is never angry with thee, but for flying from him, or for drawing back, or being too ſtrange, and refuſing the kindneſs and felicity of his preſence. The day is coming when the proudeſt of the

the Sons of Men would be glad of a good look from him, that thou haſt leave to walk with: Even they that would not look on thee, and they that injured and abuſed thee, and they that inferiours could have no acceſs to; O how glad would they be then of a Smile, or a word of hope and mercy from thy Father! Draw near then to him, on whom the whole Creation doth depend; whoſe favour at laſt the proudeſt and the worſt would purchaſe with the loudeſt cries, when all their pomp and pleaſure is gone, and can purchaſe nothing. O walk with him that is Love it ſelf, and think him not *unwilling* or *unlovely*; and let not the Deceiver by hideous miſrepreſentations drive thee from him: when thou haſt felt a while the ſtorms abroad, methinks thou ſhouldſt ſay, How good, how ſafe, how ſweet is it to draw near to God!

7. *With whom ſhould I ſo deſirouſly converſe, as with him whom I muſt live with for ever?* If I take pleaſure in my Houſe, or Land, or Country, my walks, my books or friends themſelves as cloathed with fleſh, I muſt poſſeſs this pleaſure but a little while; Henceforth know we no man

man after the fleſh: Had we known Chriſt himſelf after the fleſh, we muſt know him ſo no more for ever. (Though his Glorified ſpiritual Body we ſhall know.) Do you converſe with Father or Mother? with Wives or Children? with Paſtors and Teachers? Though you may converſe with theſe as *Glorified Saints*, when you come to Chriſt, yet in *theſe Relations* that they ſtand in to you now, you ſhall converſe with them but a little while: *For the time is ſhort: It remaineth that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep as though they wept not; and they that rejoyce as though they rejoyced not; and they that buy as though they poſſeſſed not; and they that uſe the World, as not abuſing it (or as though they uſed it not:) for the faſhion of this World doth paſs away.*] 1 Cor. 7. 29, 30, 31.

Why then ſhould I ſo much regard, a converſe of ſo ſhort continuance? Why ſhould I be ſo familiar in my Inn, and ſo in love with that familiarity, as to grieve when I muſt but think of leaving it, or talk of going home, and look forward to the place where I muſt dwell for ever? ſhall I be fond of the company of

a paſſenger that I travel with (yea perhaps one that doth but meet me in the way, and goeth to a contrary place) and ſhall I not take more pleaſure to remember home? I will not be ſo uncivil as to deny thoſe I meet a ſhort ſalute, or to be friendly with my fellow-Travellers: But remember, O my Soul, that thou doſt not *dwell but travel* here, and that it is thy Fathers Houſe where thou muſt abide forever: Yea and he is nearer thee than Man (though inviſible) even in thy way. O ſee him then that is inviſible: Hearken to him when he ſpeaketh: Obey his voice: Obſerve his way: Speak to him boldly, though humbly and reverently, as his Child, about the great concernments of thy State: Tell him what it is that aileth thee: And ſeeing all thy ſmart is the fruit of thy own ſin, confeſs thy folly and unkindneſs, crave his forgiveneſs, and remember him what his Son hath ſuffered, and for what: Treat with him about thy future courſe: Deſire his Grace, and give up thy ſelf to his Conduct and his Cure: Weep over in his Ears the Hiſtory of thy miſdoings and unthankful courſe: Tell it him with penitential tears and groans: But tell

him

him alſo the advantage that he hath for the honouring of his grace, if it may now abound where ſin aboundeth: Tell him that thou art moſt offended with thy ſelf, for that which he is moſt offended with: That thou art angry with thy diſobedient unthankful heart: That thou art even a weary of that heart that loveth him no more: And that it ſhall never pleaſe thee, till it love him better and be more deſirous to pleaſe him: Tell him of thy Enemies, and crave the protection of his Love: Tell him of thy frailties, infirmities and paſſions, and crave not only his tender forbearance, but his help: Tell him that without him thou canſt do nothing; and crave the Grace that is ſufficient for thee, that through him that ſtrengtheneth thee thou mayeſt do all things: When thou falleſt, deſpair not, but crave his helping hand to raiſe thee. Speak to him eſpecially of the everlaſting things, and thank him for his Promiſes, and for thy Hopes: For what thou ſhalt be, and have, and do among his *Holy ones* for ever. Expreſs thy joys in the promiſe of thoſe joys; that thou muſt ſee his Glory, and love him, and praiſe him better than

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thou canſt now deſire. Begin thoſe praiſes, and as thou walkeſt with him, take pleaſure in the mention of his perfections; be thankful to him and ſpeak good of his Name: Solace thy ſelf in remembring what a God, what a defence and portion all believers have: And in conſidering whither he is now conducting thee, and what he will do with thee, and what uſe he will make of thee forever: Speak with Rejoycing of the glory of his works, and the righteouſneſs of his judgments, and the holineſs and evenneſs of his ways: Sing forth his praiſes with a joyful heart, and pleaſant and triumphing voice; and frown away all flaviſh fears, all importune malicious ſuggeſtions or doubts, all peeviſh hurtful nipping griefs, that would mar or interrupt the melody; and would untune or unſtring a raiſed well compoſed Soul. Thy Father loveth thy very moans and Tears: But how much more doth he love thy Thanks and Praiſe? Or if indeed it be a Winter time, a ſtormy day with thee, and he ſeem to chide or hide his face becauſe thou haſt offended him, let the cloud that is gathered by thy Folly come down in tears, and tell him, Thou haſt

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ſinned againſt Heaven and before him, and art no more worthy to be called his Son; but yet fly not from him, but beg his pardon and the priviledges of a Servant: And thou wilt find embracements, when thou feareſt condemnation: and find that he is merciful and ready to forgive: Only return, and keep cloſer to him for the time to come. If the breach through thy neglect be gone ſo far, as that thou ſeemeſt to have loſt thy God, and to be caſt off, and left forſaken; deſpair not yet; for he doth but hide his face till thou repent: He doth not forſake thee, but only tell thee what it is to walk ſo careleſly as if thou wouldſt forſake him: Thou art faſter and ſurer in his Love and Covenant then thou canſt believe or apprehend. Thy Lord was as dear as ever to his Father, when he cryed out, *My God, why haſt thou forſaken me.* But yet neglect him not, and be not regardleſs of his withdrawings and of thy loſs: Lift up thy voice and cry but [*Father*;] in deſpight of unbelief, cry out [*My Father, my Saviour, my God,*] and thou ſhalt hear him Anſwer thee at laſt [*My Child:*] Cry out [*O why doſt thou hide thy face?*

and why haſt thou forſaken me! O what ſhall I do here without thee! O leave me not, loſe me not in this howling wilderneſs! Let me not be a prey to any ravening beaſt! to my ſin, to Satan, to my foes and thine!] Lift up thy voice and weep, and tell him, they are the tears and lamentation of *his Child*: O beg of him, that thy wanderings and childiſh folly, may not be taken as acts of enmity, or at leaſt that they may be pardoned; and though he correct thee, that he will return and not forſake thee, but ſtill take thee and uſe thee as his child. Or if thou haſt not words to pour out before him, at leaſt ſmite upon thy breaſt, and though thou be aſhamed or afraid to look up toward Heaven, look down and ſay, [*O Lord, be merciful to me a ſinner,*] and he will take it for an acceptable ſuit, that tendeth to thy pardon and juſtification, and will number ſuch a ſentance with the prayers which he *cannot* deny. Or if thou cry, and canſt not hear of him, and haſt long called out upon thy *Fathers Name*, and heareſt not his voice and haſt no return; enquire after him of thoſe thou meeteſt: Ask for him of them that know him and are acquainted with his way! Make thy moan unto the watch-

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men; and ask them, where thou mayſt find thy Lord. And at laſt he will appear to thee, and find thee firſt, that thou mayſt find him, and ſhew thee where it was that thou didſt loſe him, by loſing thy ſelf and turning from him! ſeek him and thou ſhalt find him: wait and he will appear in kindneſs: For he never faileth or forſaketh thoſe that wait upon him.

This kind of Converſe, O my ſoul, thou haſt to proſecute with thy God. Thou haſt alſo the concernments of all *his ſervants*; his *afflicted ones*, his *broken hearted ones*, his *diſeaſed ones*, his *perſecuted ones*, to tell him of: Tell him alſo of the concernments of *his Kingdom*, the fury of his Enemies, the diſhonour they caſt upon his Name, the matters of his Goſpel, cauſe and intereſt in the world: But ſtill let his Righteous Judgment be remembred, and all be terminated in the glorious everlaſting Kingdom.

Is it not much better thus to converſe with him that I muſt be with for ever, about the place, and the company, and work, and concernments of my perpetual abode, then to be taken up with ſtrangers in my way, and detained by their impertinencies?

I have form'd my ſelf ſo long in theſe meditations, that I will but name the reſt, and tell you what I had further to have treated on, and leave the enlargement to your own meditations.

8. I have no reaſon to be weary of converſe with God, ſeeing *it is that for which all human converſe is regardable.* Converſe with *man* is only ſo far deſirable as it tendeth to our *Converſe with God*: And therefore the *end* muſt be preferred before the *means.*

9. It is the *Office of Chriſt*, and the *work of the Holy Ghoſt*, and the *uſe* of all the *means of Grace*, and of *all creatures*, *mercies* and *afflictions*, to reduce our ſtraying ſouls to God, that we may converſe with him and enjoy him.

10. *Converſe with God is moſt ſuitable to thoſe that are ſo near to death*; It beſt prepareth for it: It is likeſt to the work that we are next to do. We had rather when *death* comes, be found converſing with *God* then with *Man*: It is *God* that a dying man hath principally to do with: It is *his judgment* that he is going to; and *his mercy* that he hath to truſt upon: And therefore it concerneth us to draw near him *now*, and be no ſtrangers to him,

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leſt ſtrangeneſs *then* ſhould be our terrour.

11. How wonderful a condeſcenſion is it that *God ſhould be willing to converſe with me*! with ſuch a worm and ſinful wretch: And therefore how unexcuſable is my crime, if I refuſe his company, and ſo great a mercy!

12. Laſtly, Heaven it ſelf is but our Converſe with God and his Glorified ones, (though in a more perfect manner then we can here conceive.) And therefore our holy converſe with him here is the ſtate that is likeſt Heaven, and that prepareth for it, and all the Heaven that is on earth.

IT remaineth now that I briefly tell you, what you ſhould do to attain and manage this Converſe with God, in the improvement of your ſolitude. (For Directions in general for *Walking with God*, I reſerve for another place.) At preſent let theſe few ſuffice.

Direct. 1. If you would comfortably Converſe with God, *make ſure that you are Reconciled to him in Chriſt, and that he is indeed your friend and Father.* Can

two walk together except they be agreed? Can you take pleaſure in dwelling with the conſuming fire? or converſing with the moſt dreadful enemy? Yet this I muſt add, that every *doubting* or *ſelf-accuſing ſoul* may not find a pretence to fly from God. 1. That God ceaſeth not to be a Father when ever a fearful ſoul is drawn to queſtion it or deny it. 2. That in the Univerſal Love and Grace of God to miſerable ſinners, and in the univerſal act of conditional pardon and oblivion, and in the offers of Grace, and the readineſs of God to receive the penitent, there is *Glad Tidings* that ſhould exceedingly rejoyce a a ſinner; and there is ſufficient encouragement to draw the moſt guilty miſerable ſinner to ſeek to God, and ſue for mercy. But yet the *ſweeteſt converſe* is for *children*, & for thoſe that have *ſome aſſurance* that they *are children.*

But perhaps you will ſay, that *this is not eaſily attained*: *How ſhall we know that he is our friend?*

In brief, I anſwer, If *you are unfeignedly friends to God*, it is becauſe he *firſt loved you.* Prefer him before all other friends, and all the wealth and vanity of the

the world; Provoke him not by wilfulneſs or neglect: uſe him as your beſt friend, and abuſe him not by diſobedience or ingratitude; own him before all, at the deareſt rates, whenever you are called to it: Deſire his preſence: Lament his abſence: Love him from the bottom of your hearts: Think not hardly of him: Suſpect him not; Miſunderſtand him not: Hearken not to his enemies: Receive not any falſe reports againſt him: Take him to be really better for you than all the world: Do theſe, and doubt not but you are friends with God, & God with you: In a word, *Be but heartily willing to be friends to God, and that God ſhould be your cheifeſt friend*, and you may be ſure that *it is ſo indeed*, and that you *are* and *have* what you *deſire*. And then how delightfully may you converſe with God!

Direct. 2. *Wholly depend on the Mediation of Chriſt, the great Reconciler*: Without him there is no *coming near to God*: But in *his Beloved* you ſhall be accepted. Whatever fear of his diſpleaſure ſhall ſurprize you, fly preſently for ſafety unto Chriſt: whatever guilt ſhall look you in the face, commit your ſelf and

cauſe to Chriſt, and deſire him to anſwer for you: When the doors of mercy ſeem to be ſhut up againſt you, fly to him that bears the keyes, and can at any time open to you, and let you in: Deſire him to anſwer for you to God, to your conſciences, and againſt all accuſers: By him alone you may boldly and comfortably converſe with God: But God will not know you out of him.

Direct. 3. *Take heed of bringing particular Guilt into the preſence of God, if you would have ſweet communion with him:* Chriſt himſelf never reconciled God to *ſin*: And the *ſinner* and *ſin* are ſo nearly related, that for all the death of Chriſt, you ſhall *feel* that iniquity dwelleth not with God; but he hateth the works of it, and the fooliſh ſhall not ſtand in his ſight; and that if you will preſume to ſin becauſe you are his Children, *be ſure your ſin will find you out.* O what fears, what ſhame, what ſelf-abhorrence and ſelf-revenge will guilt raiſe in a penitent ſoul, when it comes into the light of the preſence of the Lord; it will unavoidable abate your boldneſs and your comforts: When you ſhould be ſweetly delighting in his pleaſed face, and promiſed Glory, you will

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be befooling your ſelves for your former ſin, and ready even to tear your fleſh, to think that ever you ſhould do as you have done, and uſe him as you would not have uſed a common friend, and caſt your ſelves upon his wrath. But an innocent ſoul, or pacified conſcience, doth walk with God in quietneſs and delight, without thoſe frowns and fears which are a taſte of Hell to others.

Direct. 4. If you would comfortably converſe with God, *be ſure that you bring not Idols in your hearts*: Take heed of *inordinate affection to any Creature*. Let all things elſe be nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your thoughts but God. Let your *Minds* be further ſeperate from them than your *Bodies*: Bring not into ſolitude or to contemplation, a proud, or luſtful, or covetous mind: It much more concerneth thee, what *Heart* thou bringeſt, that what *Place* thou art *in*, or what *work* thou art upon. A mind that is drowned in ambition, ſenſuality or paſſion, will ſcarce find God any ſooner in any wilderneſs than in a croud (unleſs he be there returning from thoſe ſins to God) where-ever he ſeeth him, God will not own and be

familiar with ſo foul a ſoul. *Seneca* could ſay [*Quid prodeſt totius regionis ſilentium, ſi affectus fremunt?*] *What good doth the ſilence of all the Country do thee, if thou have the noiſe of raging affections within?*] And *Gregory* ſaith [*Qui corpore remotus vivit, &c. He that in body is far enough from the tumult of human converſation, is not in ſolitude, if he buſie himſelf with earthly cogitations and deſires: and he is not in the City that is not troubled with the tumult of worldly cares or fears, though he be preſſed with the popular crouds.*] Bring not thy houſe, or land, or credit, or carnal friend along with thee in thy heart, if thou deſire and expect to walk in Heaven, and to converſe with God.

Direct. 5. *Live ſtill by Faith*; *Let Faith lay Heaven and Earth as it were together*: Look not at God as if he were *far* off: ſet him aways as before you, even as at your right hand; *Pſal.* 16. 8. Be ſtill with him when you awake, *Pſal.* 139. 18. In the morning thank him for your reſt; and deliver up your ſelf to his conduct and ſervice for that day. Go forth as with him, and to do his work: Do every action, with the Command of God, and the promiſe of Heaven before your eyes,

and

and upon your hearts: Live as thoſe that have incomparably more to do with *God* and *Heaven*, than all this world; That you may ſay with *David*, Pſal. 37. 25, 26. (as aforecited) *Whom have I in Heaven but thee! and there is none on Earth that I deſire beſides thee*:] And with *Paul*, Phil. 1. 21. [*To me to Live is Chriſt, and to Dye is gain.*] You muſt ſhut up the eye of ſenſe (ſave as ſubordinate to Faith) and live by Faith upon a God, & Chriſt, and a World that is unſeen, if you would know by experience what it is to be above the brutiſh life of ſenſualiſts, and to Converſe with God. O Chriſtian, if thou hadſt rightly learned this bleſſed life, what a high and noble ſoul-converſation wouldſt thou have! How eaſily wouldſt thou ſpare, and how little wouldſt thou miſs the favour of the greateſt, the preſence of any worldly comfort! City or Solitude would be much alike to thee, ſaving that the place and ſtate would be beſt to thee, where thou haſt the greateſt help and freedom to converſe with God. Thou wouldſt ſay, of human ſociety as *Seneca* [*Unus pro populo mihi eſt, & populus pro uno: Mihi ſatis eſt unus, ſatis eſt nullus.*] [*One is inſtead of all the people to me, and the*

the people as one; One is enough for me, and none is enough.] Thus being taken up with God, thou mighteſt live in priſon as at liberty, and in a wilderneſs as in a City, and in a place of baniſhment as in thy native Land: For the Earth is the Lords, and the fulneſs thereof: and everywhere thou mayeſt find him, and converſe with him, and lift up pure hands unto him: In every place thou art within the ſight of home; and Heaven is in thine eye, and thou art converſing with that God, in whoſe converſe the higheſt Angels do place their higheſt felicity and delight.

How little cauſe then have all the Churches enemies to triumph, that can never ſhut up a true believer from the preſence of his God? nor baniſh him into ſuch a place where he cannot have his converſation in Heaven? The ſtones that were caſt at holy *Stephen*, could not hinder him from ſeeing the Heavens opened, and Chriſt ſitting at the right hand of God. A *Patmos* allowed holy *John* Communion with Chriſt, being there in the Spirit on the Lords day, *Rev.* 1. 9, 10. Chriſt never ſo ſpeedily and comfortably owneth his ſervants, as when the world diſown

diſowneth them, and abuſeth them for his ſake, and hurls them up and down as the ſcorn and off-ſcouring of all. He quickly found the blind man that he had cured, when once the Jews had caſt him out, *Joh.* 9. 35. Perſecutors do but promote the bleſſedneſs and exceeding joy of ſufferers for Chriſt, *Mat.* 5. 11. 12.

And how little Reaſon then have Chriſtians to ſhun ſuch ſufferings by unlawful means, which turn to their ſo great advantage? and to give ſo dear as the hazard of their ſouls by wilful ſin, to eſcape the honour, and ſafety, and commodity of Martyrdom?

And indeed we judge not, we Love not, we live not as ſanctified ones muſt do, if we *judge* not that the trueſt Liberty, and Love it not as the Beſt Condition, in which we may *Beſt* converſe with God. And O how much harder is it to walk with God, in a Court, in the midſt of ſenſual delights, than in a priſon or wilderneſs, where we have none to interrupt us, and nothing elſe to take us up? It is our prepoſſeſſed minds, our earthly hearts, our carnal affections and concupiſence, and the pleaſures of a proſperous ſtate, that

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are the priſon and the Jaylors of our ſouls. Were it not for theſe, how *free* ſhould we be, though our bodies were confined to the ſtraighteſt room! He is at Liberty that can walk in Heaven, and have acceſs to God, and make uſe of all the Creatures in the world, to the promoting of this his Heavenly converſation. And he is the priſoner whoſe ſoul is chained to fleſh and earth, and confined to his lands and houſes, and feedeth on the duſt of worldly riches, or walloweth in the dung and filth of gluttony, drunkenneſs and luſt: that are far from God, and deſire not to be near him; but ſay to him, Depart from us, we would not have the knowledge of thy ways: that Love their priſons and chains ſo well, that they would not be ſet free, but hate thoſe with the cruelleſt hatred that endeavour their deliverance. Thoſe are the poor priſoners of Satan, that have not liberty to believe, nor to Love God, nor converſe in Heaven, nor ſeriouſly to mind or ſeek the things that are high and honourable: that have not liberty to meditate or pray, or ſeriouſly to ſpeak of holy things, nor

to

to love and converſe with thoſe that do ſo: that are tyed ſo hard to the drudgery of ſin, that they have not liberty one month, or week, or day, to leave it, and walk with God ſo much as for recreation! But he that liveth in the family of God, and is employed in attending him, and doth converſe with Chriſt, and the Hoſt of Holy ones above, in reaſon ſhould not much complain of his want of friends, or company or accommodations, nor yet be too impatient of any corporal confinement.

Laſtly, be ſure then moſt narrowly to watch your hearts, that nothing have entertainment there, which is againſt your Liberty of converſe with God. Fill not thoſe Hearts with worldly traſh, which are made and new-made to be the dwelling place of God. Deſire not the company which would diminiſh your heavenly acquaintance and correſpondency. Be not unfriendly, nor conceited of a ſelf-ſufficiency; but yet beware leſt under the honeſt ingenuous title of a friend, a ſpecial, faithful, prudent, faithful friend, you ſhould entertain an Idol, or an enemy to your Love of God, or a corrival and competitor

petitor with your higheſt friend: For if you do, it is not the ſpecious title of a friend that will ſave you from the thorns and bryars of diſquietment, and from greater troubles than ever you found from open enemies.

O bleſſed be that High and everlaſting friend, who is every way ſuited to the upright ſouls! To their Minds, their Memories, their Delight, their Love, &c. By ſureſt Truth, by fulleſt Goodneſs, by cleareſt Light, by deareſt Love, by firmeſt Conſtancy, &c. — O why hath my drowſie and darkſighted ſoul been ſo ſeldom with him! why hath it ſo often, ſo ſtrangely, and ſo unthankfully paſſed by, and not obſerved him, nor hearkened to his kindeſt calls! O what is all this traſh and trouble that hath filled my memory, and employed my mind, and cheated and corrupted my affections, while my deareſt Lord hath been days and nights ſo unworthily forgotten, ſo contemptuouſly neglected, and diſregarded, and loved as if I loved him not! O that theſe *drowſie* and thoſe *waking* nights, thoſe loitered, loſt, and empty hours, had been ſpent in the humbleſt converſe with

with him, which have been dreamed and doted away upon —— now I know not what! O my God, how much wiſer and happier had I been, had I rather choſen to mourn with thee, than to rejoyce and ſport with any other! O that I had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the creature! For the time to come, let that be my friend, that moſt befriendeth my dark, and dull, and backward ſoul, in its undertaken progreſs, and heavenly converſation! Or if there be none ſuch upon earth, let me here take one for my friend! O blot out every Name from my corrupted heart, which hindereth the deeper engraving of thy Name! Ah Lord, what a ſtone, what a blind ungrateful thing, is a Heart not touched with celeſtial Love! yet ſhall I not run to thee, when I have none elſe that will know me! ſhall I not draw near thee, when all fly from me! When daily experience cryeth out ſo loud [NONE BUT CHRIST: GOD OR NOTHING.] Ah fooliſh Heart, that haſt thought of it [Where is that place, that Cave or Deſert, where I might ſooneſt find thee, and fulleſt enjoy thee?

Is it in the wilderneſs that thou walkeſt, or in the croud: in the Cloſet, or in the Church; where is it that I might ſooneſt meet with God?] But alas, I now perceive, that I have a *Heart* to find, before I am like to find my *Lord*! O Loveleſs, Lifeleſs, ſtony heart! that's dead to him that gave it Life! and to none but him! Could I not *Love*, or *Think*, or *Feel* at all, methinks I were leſs dead than now? Leſs dead, if dead, than now I am alive? I had almoſt ſaid [Lord, let me never Love more till I can Love thee? Nor think more on any thing till I can more willingly think of thee?] But I muſt ſuppreſs that wiſh; for *Life* will *act*: And the mercies and motions of *Nature* are *neceſſary* to thoſe of Grace. And therefore in the life of Nature, and in the glimmerings of thy Light, I will wait for more of the Celeſtial life! My God, thou haſt my conſent! It is here atteſted under my hand: *Separate me from what and whom thou wilt, ſo I may but be nearer thee*! Let me Love thee more, and feel more of thy Love, and then let me Love or be beloved of the world, as little as thou wilt.

I thought *ſelf-love* had been a more predominant thing: But now I find that Repentance hath its anger, its Hatred and its Revenge! I am truly Angry with that Heart that hath ſo oft and fooliſhly offended thee! Methinks I *hate* that Heart that is ſo cold and backward in thy love, and almoſt grudge it a dwelling in my breaſt! Alas when Love ſhould be the life of Prayer, the life of holy Meditation, the life of Sermons and of holy Conference, and my ſoul in theſe ſhould long to meet thee, and delight to mention thee, I ſtraggle Lord, I know not whether! or I ſit ſtill and wiſh, but do not riſe and run and follow thee, yea, I do not what I ſeem to do. All's dead, all's dead, for want of Love! I often cry, O where is that place, where the quickening beams of Heaven are warmeſt, that my ſoul might ſeek it out! But whether ever I go, to City or to Solitude, alas, I find it is not *Place* that makes the difference. I know that Chriſt is perfectly repleniſhed with Life and Light, and Love Divine: And I hear him as our Head and Treaſure proclaimed and offered

to

to us in the Goſpel! This is thy Record, that he that hath the Son hath Life! O why then is my barren ſoul ſo empty! I thought I had long ago conſented to thy offer; and then according to thy Covenant, both He and Life in him are mine! And yet muſt I ſtill be dark and dead!

Ah deareſt Lord, I ſay not that I have too long waited! but if I *continue thus* to wait, wilt thou never find the time of Love? and come and own thy gaſping worm? wilt thou never diſſipate theſe clouds, and ſhine upon this dead and darkened ſoul? Hath my Night no Day? Thruſt me not from thee, O my God! For that's a Hell, to be thruſt from God. But ſure the cauſe is all at home, could I find it out, or rather could I cure it! It is ſure *my* face that's turned from God, when I ſay, His face is turned from me. But if my Life muſt here be out of ſight, and hidden in the Root (with Chriſt in God,) and if all the reſt be reſerved for that better world, and I muſt here have but theſe ſmall beginnings, O make me more to Love, and long for the bleſſed day of thine appearing,

and

and not to fear the time of my deliverance, nor unbelievingly to linger in this *Sodom*, as one that had rather ſtay with ſin, then come to thee! Though ſin hath made me backward to the *fight*, let it not make me backward to receive the Crown; Though it hath made me a loiterer in thy work, let it not make me backward to receive that wages, which thy Love will give to our pardoned, poor, accepted ſervices. Though I have too oft drawn back, when I ſhould have come unto thee, and walked with thee in thy ways of Grace, yet heal that unbelief, and diſaffection, which would make me to draw back, when thou calleſt me to poſſeſs thy Glory? Though the ſickneſs and lameneſs of my ſoul have hindered me in my journy, yet let their painfulneſs help me to deſire to be delivered from them, and to be at home, where (without the interpoſing nights of thy diſpleaſure) I ſhall fully feel thy fulleſt Love, and walk with thy Glorified ones in the Light of thy Glory, triumphing in thy Praiſe for evermore. *Amen.*

BUT

BUT now I have given you theſe few Directions for the *improvement of your ſolitude for converſe with God*, leſt I ſhould occaſion the hurt of thoſe that are unfit for the Leſſon I have given, I muſt conclude with this Caution (which I have formerly alſo publiſhed,) That it is not malencholly or weak-headed perſons, who are not able to bear ſuch exerciſes, for whom I have written theſe Directions. Thoſe that are not able to be much in ſerious ſolitary thoughtfulneſs, without confuſions and diſtracting ſuggeſtions, and hurrying vexatious thoughts, muſt ſet themſelves for the moſt part to thoſe duties which are to be done in company by the help of others; and muſt be very little in ſolitary duties: For to them whoſe natural faculties are ſo diſeaſed or weak, it is *no duty*, as being *no means* to do them the deſired good; but while they ſtrive to do that which they are naturally unable to endure, they will but confound and diſtract themſelves, and make themſelves unable for thoſe other duties which yet they are not utterly unfit for. To ſuch perſons therefore inſtead of order-

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ed, well-digeſted Meditations, and much time ſpent in ſecret thoughtfulneſs, it muſt ſuffice that they be brief in ſecret Prayer, and take up with ſuch occaſional abrupter Meditations as they are capable of, and that they be the more in reading, hearing, conference, and praying and praiſing God with others: until their melancholly diſtempers are ſo far overcome, as that (by the direction of their Spiritual Guides) they may judge themſelves fit for this improvement of their Solitude.

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DOMINUS ILLUMINATIO MEA

TO THE

READER.

THis *Excellent Diſcourſe, breathing the Excellence of it's (now Deceaſed) Authors Spirit, craves thy moſt ſerious peruſal; and it will plentifully reward the hours which ſhall be ſpent thereon. It greatly ſavours of deep thoughts, ſtrict obſervations, and long and great experience of God, of Things, and Perſons. Creatures look beſt when*

at a distance, and in prospect; but when nearer to us, they are then easily looked through, and seldom found to correspond with their Appearances to us, and with our expectations from them. But God is such a deep and boundless Abyss of Perfection, as most delightfully will endure and recompence all the severity and closeness of our eternal Thoughts about him. Perfected Spirits are all thought concerning God, and find their Hearts enflamed, and all their Powers invigorated thereby eternally, to inexpressible Satisfaction: And what varieties of pleasant Thoughts the Innumerable Instances and Mirrours of Divine Excellencies in the Hea-

vens will endlesly Minister unto, I do not know, nor dare I guess too boldly at them. But how those Souls can look for Heaven, or truly be accounted gracious, who never retire solemnly to converse with God, I know not. Surely, where God is not more than all to us, he can be comfortably nothing: And our religious Exercises and Pretences must needs be mean and dull, whilst God is triflingly and seldom thought on, and conversed with by us. Can holy Walking be preserved and promoted without love? Can love to God and Christ, and to the invisible State, be kindled, cherished, and continually advanced without Faith? Can Faith be any thing but Fancy and Pre-

ſumption, without Thought and Knowledge? And can the Life of Faith, Hope, Love, and holy Walking, be fixt and vigorous, and proficient, without our ſerious and frequent repreſentations of God unto our ſelves by ſolemn Contemplations of his excellent Perfections, free Communications, plentiful Proviſions, and glorious Deſigns, whereto he hath entitled us, ſeeing our Religion and Devotions in all the parts thereof can have no Life and Soul but this? What is it to converſe with God in Solitude, but to actuate our Thoughts of what we know concerning God in Chriſt, and to accomodate them to all the need-

ful

ful and uſeful Purpoſes of Religion and Devotion; and to make Thoughts ſolemnly ſerviceable to the great Ends thereof, viz. *our due and ſeaſonable Repreſentations of our God to us, and of our ſelves to him in Chriſt, purſuant to the ſtated and occaſional Ends and Intereſts of Chriſtian Godlineſs, as the matter may require? Converſing thus with God, wants not its great Advantages in life and death. And if theſe Thoughts contained in this Book, (which did ſo greatly reconcile the Author to the Thoughts of his then approaching, but now experienced Death,) were more in Exerciſe at Funeral*

Funeral Solemnities, and this Book then put into the hands of Mourners, it would be no matter of Repentance that I know of. These are the hasty Thoughts and Sentiments of thine in and for the Lord, whilst

Matthew Sylvester.

London, Sept. 12. 1692.

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OF CONVERSING WITH God, &c.

Joh. XVI. 32.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea is come, that ye ſhall be ſcattered every Man to his own, and ſhall leave me alone: And yet I am not alone, becauſe the Father is with me.

I Am this day to handle the inſtance of [*Chriſt's being forſaken by his Friends and Followers.*]

He thought meet to *foretell* them, how they ſhould manifeſt their infirmity and

untruſtineſs in this temporary forſaking of him, that ſo he might fullyer convince them, that he knew what was in Man, and that he knew future contingencies (or things to come, which ſeem moſt dependent on the Will of Man) and *that he* voluntarily ſubmitted to his deſerted State, and expected no ſupport from Creatures, but that *Man* ſhould then do *leaſt for Chriſt*, when *Chriſt* was doing *moſt for Man*; that *Man* by an unthankful *forſaking Chriſt*, ſhould then manifeſt his *forſaken* deplorate ſtate, when Chriſt was to make Atonement for his Reconciliation to God, and was preparing the moſt coſtly Remedy for his Recovery. He *foretold* them of the Fruit which their Infirmity would produce, to humble them that were apt to think too highly of themſelves for the late free Confeſſion they had made of Chriſt, when they had newly ſaid [*Now we are ſure that thou knoweſt all things: by this we are ſure, that thou comeſt forth from God*, ver. 30.

He anſwereth them [*Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh*, &c.] Not that Chriſt would not have his Servants know his graces in them, but he would alſo

alſo have them know the *Corruption* that is latent, and the infirmity conſiſtent with their grace. We are very apt to judge of all that *is in us*, and of all that we *ſhall do* hereafter, by what we *feel at the preſent* upon our hearts. As when we *feel* the ſtirring of ſome *Corruption*, we are apt to think that there is *nothing elſe*, and hardly perceive the contrary grace, and are apt to think it will never be better with us: So when we *feel* the Exerciſe of *Faith*, *Deſire* or *Love*, we are apt to overlook the contrary *Corruptions*, and to think that we ſhall never feel them more. But Chriſt would keep us both humble and vigilant, by acquainting us with the mutability and unconſtancy of our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget that the time is coming when it may go worſe. As Chriſt ſaid to his Diſciples, here in the caſe of *Believing*, we may ſay to our ſelves in that and other caſes: *Do we now Believe?* It is well: But the time may be coming in which we may be brought to ſhake with the ſtirrings of our remaining Unbelief, and ſhrewdly tempted to queſtion the truth of Chriſtianity it ſelf, and of the Holy Scrip-

tures, and of the Life to come. *Do we now rejoyce* in the persuasions of the Love of God? The time may be coming when we may think our selves forsaken and undone, and think he will esteem and use us as his Enemies. *Do we now pray with fervour*, and pour out our Souls enlargedly to God? It is well: But the time may be coming when we shall seem to be as dumb and prayerless, and say, we cannot pray, or else we find no audience and acceptance of our Prayers. Christ knoweth that in us which we little know by our selves; and therefore may *foreknow*, that we will commit such Sins, or fall into such Dangers, as we little *fear*.

What Christ here propheseth to them did afterwards all come to pass. As soon as ever Danger and Trouble did appear, they began to flag, and to shew how ill they could adhere unto him or suffer with him, without his special corroborating Grace. In the Garden when he was sweating Blood in Prayer, they were sleeping; Though the Spirit was willing, the Flesh was weak; They could not *watch with him one hour*, Mat. 26. 40, 41. When he was apprehend-

ed,

ed, they ſhifted each Man for himſelf, *Mat.* 26. 56. [*Then all the Diſciples forſook him and fled.* And as this is ſaid to be *that the Scriptures might be fulfilled*, Mat. 26. 54, 56. ſo it *might* be ſaid to be, That *this prediction of Chriſt himſelf might be fulfilled.* Not that Scripture Propheſies did *cauſe the Sin* by which they were fulfilled, nor that God cauſed the ſin to fulfill his own Predictions, but that God cannot be deceived who foretold in Scriptures long before, that thus it would come to paſs: When it is ſaid, That [*thus it muſt be, that the Scripture may be fulfilled*] the meaning is not, that [*thus God will make it be*] or [*thus he cauſeth Men to do*] that he may fulfill the Scriptures: It is not *Neceſſitas conſequentis vel cauſata* that is inferred from Predictions; but only *Neceſſitas conſequentiæ*; a *Logical Neceſſity in ordine cognoſcendi & dicendi*; not a *Natural Neceſſity in ordine eſſendi:* not a *Neceſſity* of the *Thing it ſelf* as *cauſed* by the Prediction or Decree; but a *Neceſſity* of the *Truth* of this *Concluſion* in *arguing*; [*ſuch a thing will be, becauſe God hath decreed, foreknown or foretold it:*]

or [*whatever God foretelleth, muſt neceſſarily come* to paſs, that is, *will certainly* come to paſs: *but this God hath foretold; therefore this will come to paſs.*]

Here are three obſervable points in the Text, that are worthy our diſtinct Conſideration, though for brevity ſake I ſhall handle them together.

1. *That Chriſt was forſaken by his own Diſciples, and left alone.*

2. *When the Diſciples left Chriſt, they were ſcattered every one to his own.* They returned to their old Habitations, and old Acquaintance, and old Employment, as if their hopes and hearts had been almoſt *broken*, and they had loſt all their labour in following Chriſt ſo long: Yet the root of Faith and Love that ſtill remained, cauſed them to enquire further of the end, and to come together in ſecret to confer about theſe Matters.

3. *When Chriſt was forſaken of his Diſciples, and left alone, yet was he not forſaken of his Father, nor left ſo alone as to be ſeparated from him or his love.*

We are now to conſider of this, not only as a *part of Chriſts Humiliation*, but alſo as a *Point* in which *we muſt expect to be conformed to him.* It may poſſibly

poſſibly ſeem ſtrange to us, that Chriſt would ſuffer *all his Diſciples* to *forſake* him in his Extremity; and I doubt it will ſeem ſtrange *to us*, when in our *extremity*, and our ſuffering for Chriſt (and perhaps *for them*) we ſhall find our ſelves forſaken by thoſe that we moſt highly valued, and had the greateſt familiarity with. But there are many Reaſons of this permiſſive Providence open to our obſervation.

1. No wonder, if when Chriſt was ſuffering *for Sin*, he would even then permit the Power and odiouſneſs of ſin to break forth, that it might be known he ſuffered *not in vain*. No wonder, if he permitted his Followers to deſert him, and to ſhew the latent Unbelief, and Selfiſhneſs, and unthankfulneſs that remained in them, that ſo they might know, that the death of Chriſt was as neceſſary for them as for others; and the *univerſality* of the *Diſeaſe* might ſhew the need that the *Remedy* ſhould be *Univerſal*. And it is none of Chriſts intent to make his Servants to ſeem better than they are, to themſelves or others, or to honour himſelf by the hiding of their Faults, but to magnifie his par-

doning and healing grace, by the means or occaſion of the ſins which he pardoneth and healeth.

2. Hereby he will bring his Followers to the fuller knowledge of themſelves, and ſhew them that which all their days ſhould keep them humble, and watchful, and ſave them from preſumption and truſting in themſelves: When we have made any full Confeſſion of Chriſt, or done him any conſiderable ſervice, we are apt to ſay with the Diſciples, *Mat.* 19. 27. [*Behold, we have forſaken all, and followed thee; What ſhall we have?*] As if they had rather been *Givers* to Chriſt, than *Receivers* from him; and had highly merited at his hand.: But when *Peter* forſweareth him, and the reſt ſhift for themſelves, and when they come to themſelves after ſuch cowardly and ungrateful Dealings, then they will better underſtand their Weakneſs, and know on whom they muſt depend.

3. Hereby alſo they ſhall better underſtand what they *would have been*, if God had left them to themſelves, that ſo they may be thankful for grace received, and may not boaſt themſelves a-

gainſt

gainſt the miſerable world, as if they had made themſelves to differ, and had not received all that grace by which they excel the common ſort: when our falls have hurt us and ſhamed us, we ſhall know to whom we muſt be beholden to ſupport us.

4. Chriſt would permit his Diſciples thus far to forſake him, becauſe he would have no *ſupport from man*, in his *ſufferings for man:* This was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from thoſe few, that but lately were his faithful ſervants: that *men* dealing like *men*, and *ſinners*, while he was doing like *God*, and as a *Saviour*, no man might challenge to himſelf the honour of contributing to the Redemption of the world, ſo much as by encouraging the Redeemer.

5. Chriſt did permit the Faith and courage of his Diſciples thus far to fail, that their witneſs to him might be of the greater credit and authority, when his actual Reſurrection and the Communication of the Spirit ſhould compel them to believe: when all their doubts were diſſipated, they that had doubted themſelves, and yet were conſtrained to believe, would be received as the moſt impartial

witneſſes by the doubting world.

6. Laſtly, by the deſertion and diſſipation of his Diſciples, Chriſt would teach us whenever we are called to follow him in ſuffering, what to expect from the beſt of men; Even to know that of themſelves they are untruſty, and may fail us: and therefore not to look for too much aſſiſtance or encouragement from them. *Paul* lived in a time when Chriſtians were more ſelf-denying and ſtedfaſt than they are now: And *Paul* was one that might better expect to be faithfully accompanied in his ſufferings for Chriſt, than any of us: And yet he ſaith, 2 *Tim.* 4. 16. [*At my firſt anſwer no man ſtood with me, but all men forſook me:*] and prayeth, that it be not laid to their charge: Thus you have ſeen ſome Reaſons why Chriſt conſented to be left of all, and permitted his Diſciples to deſert him in his ſufferings.

Yet note here, that it is but a partial temporary *forſaking* that Chriſt permitteth; and not a total or final forſaking or Apoſtaſie. Though he will let them ſee that they are *yet men*, yet will he not leave them to be but *as other men*: Nor will he quite caſt them off, or ſuffer them to periſh. Nor

Nor is it all alike that thus forſake him; *Peter* doth not do as *Judas*: The *ſincere* may manifeſt their *infirmity*; but the *Hypocrites* will manifeſt their *Hypocriſie*.

And accordingly in *our ſufferings* our familiars that were falſ-hearted (as being worldlings and carnal at the heart may perhaps *betray* us, and *ſet againſt us*, or *forſake the cauſe of Chriſt*, and follow the way of gain and honour: when our tempted ſhrinking friends that yet may have ſome ſincerity, may perhaps *look ſtrange* at us, and ſeem *not* to *know us*, and may hide their heads, and ſhew their fears; and perhaps alſo begin to ſtudy ſome ſelf-deceiving arguments and diſtinctions, and to ſtretch their conſciences, and venture on ſome ſin, becauſe they are afraid to venture on affliction; till Chriſt ſhall caſt a gracious rebuking quickning aſpect on them, and ſhame them for their ſinful ſhame, & fear them from their ſinful fears, and inflame their Love to him by the motions of his Love to them, and deſtroy the Love that turned them for him: And then the ſame men that diſhonourably failed Chriſt and us, and began to ſhrink, will turn back and re-aſſume their arms,

and

and by patient ſuffering overcome, and win the Crown as we have done before them.

Uſe. CHriſtians, expect to be conformed to your Lord in *this part* of his Humiliation alſo: Are your friends yet faſt and friendly to you? For all that expect that *many* of them at leaſt ſhould prove leſs friendly: and promiſe not your ſelves an unchanged conſtancy in them: Are they yet *uſeful* to you? expect the time when they cannot help you: Are they your comforters and delight, and is their company much of your ſolace upon earth? Be ready for the time when they *may* become your ſharpeſt ſcourges, and moſt heart-peircing griefs, or at leaſt when you ſhall ſay, We have no pleaſure in them. Have any of them, or all, already failed you? what wonder? Are they not men, and ſinners? To whom were they ever ſo conſtant as not to fail them? Rebuke your ſelves for your unwarrantable expectations from them: And learn hereafter to know what man is, and expect that friends ſhould uſe you as followeth.

1. Some

1. Some of them that you thought *ſincere*, ſhall prove perhaps *unfaithful* and *diſſemblers*, and upon *fallings out*, or matters of *ſelf-intereſt* may ſeek your ruine. Are you better than *David* that had an *Achitophel*? or than *Paul* that had a *Demas*? or than Chriſt that had a *Judas*? Some will *forſake God*: what wonder then if they forſake you? *Becauſe iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall wax cold*, Mat. 24. 12. Where pride and vain glory, and ſenſuality and worldlineſs are unmortified at the heart, there is no truſtineſs in ſuch perſons: For their wealth, or honour, or fleſhly intereſt, they will part with God and their Salvation; much more with their beſt deſerving friends. Why may not you as well as *Job* have occaſion to complain, [*He hath put my Brethren far from me, and my Acquaintance are very eſtranged from me: My kinſfolk have failed, and my familiar Friends have forgotten me: They that dwell in my Houſe, and my Maidens count me for a Stranger: I am an Alien in their ſight: I called my Servant, and he gave me no Anſwer: I intreated him with my mouth: My breath is ſtrange to my Wife; though I intreated for the*

Childrens

Childrens ſake of my own Body: Yea, young Children diſpiſed me: I aroſe, and they ſpake againſt me: All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned againſt me, Job 19. 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. Why may not you as well as *David* be put to ſay, *Yea mine own familiar Friend in whom I truſted, which did eat of my Bread, hath lift up his Heel againſt me!*] Pſal. 41. 9. Thoſe that have been moſt acquainted with the ſecrets of your Soul, and privy to your very thoughts, may be the perſons that ſhall betray you, or grow ſtrange to you. Thoſe that you have moſt obliged by benefits, may prove your greateſt Enemies. You may find ſome of your Friends like Birds of prey, that hover about you for what they can get, and when they have catcht it, fly away. If you have given them all that you have, they will forſake you, and perhaps reproach you, becauſe you have no more to give them. They are your Friends more for what they *yet expect* from you, than for what they have already received. If you cannot ſtill be helpful to them, or feed their covetous deſires, or ſupply their wants, you are

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to them but as one that they had never known. Many a faithful Miniſter of Chriſt hath ſtudied, and preacht, and prayed, and wept for their Peoples Souls, and after all have been taken for their Enemies, and uſed as ſuch; yea even *becauſe* they have *done ſo much* for them. Like the Patient, that being cured of a mortal ſickneſs, ſued his Phyſician at Law for making him ſick with the Phyſick (But it is indeed *our uncured* Patients only that are offended with us.) *Paul* was accounted an Enemy to the *Galathians*, becauſe he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth maketh the faithfulleſt Preachers moſt ungrateful. It muſt ſeem no wonder to a Preacher of the Goſpel, when he hath entreated, prayed, and wept night and day for miſerable Souls, and laid his hands as it were under their feet in hopes of their Converſion and Salvation, to find them after all, his bitter Enemies, and ſeeking his Deſtruction, that could have laid down his Life for their Salvation. *Jeremy* ſeemed too impatient under this affliction, when he ſaid [*Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the Voice of them that contend with me: Shall Evil be recompenſed*

compenſed for good? Remember that I ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them, and to turn away thy Wrath from them: Therefore deliver up their Children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the Sword, &c. Jer. 18, 19, 20.

Thus may Ingratitude afflict you, and kindneſs be requited with unkindneſs, and the greateſt benefits be forgotten, and requited with the greateſt wrongs: Your old Familiars may be your Foes: and you may be put to ſay as *Jeremy* [*For I heard the defaming of many: Fear on every ſide: Report, ſay they, and we will report it: All my Familiars watched for my halting, ſaying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we ſhall prevail againſt him, and we ſhall take our revenge on him.*] Jer. 20. 10. Thus muſt the Servants of Chriſt be uſed, in conformity to their ſuffering Head.

2. And ſome that are ſincere, and whoſe hearts are with you, may yet be drawn by temptation to *diſown* you: When malice is ſlandering you, timerous friendſhip may perhaps be ſilent, and afraid to juſtifie you or take your part: When a *Peter* in ſuch imbecility and fear can diſown and deny his *ſuffering*

ing Lord, what wonder if faint hearted friends diſown you, or me, that may give them too much occaſion or pretence? Why may not you and I be put to ſay as *David* did, *Pſal.* 38. 11, 12. [*My lovers and my Friends ſtand aloof from my ſore, and my Kinſmen ſtand afar off: They that ſeek after my Life lay Snares for me: And they that ſeek my hurt ſpeak miſchievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.*] They that in fearfulneſs will fail their *Maker and Redeemer*, and hazard their *Salvation*, may by a ſmaller temptation be drawn to fail ſuch *friends as we.*

3. Moreover, a hundred things may occaſion *fallings out*, even amongſt *unfeigned Friends*: *Paſſions* may cauſe inconvenient actions or expreſſions, and theſe may cauſe paſſions in their Friends; and theſe may grow ſo high till Friends do ſeem to one another to be like Enemies: *Paul* and *Barnabas* may grow ſo hot, as to fall out to a parture. How eaſily can Satan ſet fire on the Tinder which he findeth in the beſt and gentleſt natures, if God permit him? No Friends ſo near and dear, that paſſionate weakneſſes may not either alienate or make a grief to one

one another; how apt are we to *take unkindneſſes* at one another, and to be *ſuſpicious* of our Friends, or *offended* with them? And how apt to give *occaſion* of ſuch offence? How apt are we to cenſure one another, and to miſinterpret the words and actions of our Friends? And how apt to give occaſion of ſuch miſtakes and cutting cenſures? And the more kindneſs we have found in, or expected from our Friends, the more their real or ſuppoſed injuries will affect us. We are apt to ſay, [*Had it been a ſtranger, I could have born it: But to be uſed thus by my boſom or familiar Friend, goes near my heart.*] And indeed the unkindneſs of Friends is no ſmall affliction; the ſuffering going uſually as near the Heart, as the perſon that cauſed it was near it: Eſpecially when our own weakneſs cauſeth us to forget the frailty and infirmities of Man, and with what allowances and expectations we muſt chooſe and uſe our Friends; and when we forget the Love that remaineth in the midſt of paſſions.

4. Alſo *croſs Intereſts* and unſuitableneſs may exceedingly interrupt the faſteſt friendſhip. *Friendſhip* is very much found-

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ed in *ſuitableneſs*, and maintained by it: And among mortals, there is no perfect ſuitableneſs to be found; but much unſuitableneſs ſtill remaineth. That which pleaſeth one, is diſpleaſing to another: One liketh this place, and the other that: One liketh this habit, and the other that: One is for mirth, and the other for ſadneſs: One for talk, and the other for ſilence: One for a publick, and the other for a private life. And their perſonallity or individuation having ſelf-love as inſeparable, will unavoidably cauſe a contrariety of intereſts. The Creature is inſufficient for us: If one have it, perhaps the other muſt want it: Like a covering too narrow for the bed. Sometimes our Reputations ſeem to ſtand croſs, ſo that one mans is diminiſhed by anothers: and then how apt is envy to create a grudge, and raiſe unfriendly jealouſies and diſtaſtes. Sometimes the Commodity of one is the diſcommodity of the other: And then [*Mine and Thine*] (which are contrary to the community of friendſhip) may divide and alienate, and make two of thoſe that ſeemed one. The inſtances of *Abraham* and *Lot* (upon the difference among their Servants) and of *Iſaac* and

and *Iſhmael*, and of *Jacob* and *Eſau*, and of *Laban* and *Jacob*, and of *Leah* and *Rachel*, and of *Joſeph* and his Brethren, and of *Saul* and *David*, and of *Ziba Mephiboſheth* and *David*, with many others tell us this. It is rare to meet with a *Jonathan*, that will endearedly love that man to the death, who is appointed to deprive him of a Kingdom. If one can but ſay [*I ſuffer by him, or I am a looſer by him*] it ſeemeth enough to excuſe unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratifie the deſires of all the covetous, ambitious, ſelf-ſeeking perſons in the World, or elſe cure their diſeaſes, and poſſeſs their minds with perfect Charity, then all the World will be your Friends.

5. *Croſs opinions* alſo are like to alienate many of your Friends. This age hath over and over again given the world as full and ſad demonſtrations of the power of *Croſs opinions*, to alienate Friends, and make diviſions, as moſt ages of the World have ever had. If your Friend be *proud*, it's wonderful how he will ſlight you, and withdraw his Love, if you be not of his *mind*. If he be *zealous*, he is eaſily tempted, to think it a part of his duty

duty to God, to diſown you if you diſſer from him, as taking you for one that diſowneth the truth of God and therefore one that God himſelf diſowneth; or at leaſt to grow *cold* in his affection toward you, and to decline from you, as he that thinks you do from God. As agreement in opinions doth ſtrangely reconcile Affections; ſo diſagreement doth ſecretly and ſtrangely alienate them; even before you are well aware, your Friend hath loſt poſſeſſion of your hearts, becauſe of an unavoidable diverſity of apprehenſions: When all your Friends have the ſame intellectual complexion and temperature, and meaſure of underſtanding with your ſelves, then you may have hope to eſcape the ruptures, which unlikelineſs and differences of apprehenſions might elſe cauſe.

6. Moreover, ſome of your friends may ſo far *overgrow* you in *wiſdom*, or *wealth*, or *honour*, or *worth*, in their *own conceits*, that they may begin to take you to be unſuitable for them, and unmeet for their further ſpecial friendſhip. Alas poor man, they will pity thee that thou art no wiſer, and that thou haſt no greater light to change thy mind as faſt as they,

they, or that thou art ſo weak and ignorant as not to ſee what ſeems to them ſo clear a truth; or that thou art ſo ſimple to caſt away thy ſelf by croſſing them that might prefer thee, or to fall under the diſpleaſure of thoſe that have power to raiſe or ruine thee: But if thou *be* ſo *ſimple*, thou mayeſt be the object of their *lamentation*, but art no *familiar friend* for them. They think it fitteſt to cloſe and converſe with thoſe of their own *rank* and *ſtature*, and not with ſuch *ſhrubs* and *children*, that may prove their trouble and diſhonour.

7. And ſome of your friends will think that by a more *through acquaintance* with you, they have found out more of your *infirmities* or *faults*; and therefore have found that you are *leſs aimable* and *valuable* than at firſt they judged you: They will think that by diſtance, unacquaintednes, and an overhaſty love and judgment, they were miſtaken in you; and that now they ſee reaſon to *repent* of the love which they think was guilty of ſome *errors* and *exceſs*: when they come nearer you, and have had more tryal of you, they will think they are fitter to judge of you than before:

before: And indeed our defects are ſo many, and all our infirmities ſo great, that the more men know us, the more they may ſee in us that deſerveth pity or reproof; and as Pictures, we appear leſs beautiful at the neareſt view: Though this will not warrant the withdrawing of that Love which is due to friends, and to vertue even in the imperfect: nor will excuſe that alienation and decay of friendſhip that is cauſed by the pride of ſuch as overlook, perhaps much greater failings and weakneſſes in themſelves, which need forgiveneſs.

8. And perhaps *ſome* of your Friends will *grow weary* of their Friendſhip, having that infirmity of humane nature, not to be much pleaſed with one thing long. Their love is a flower that quickly withereth: It is a ſhort liv'd thing that ſoon groweth old. It muſt be *novelty* that muſt feed their love and their delight.

9. And perhaps they may have got ſome better *Friends* in their apprehenſions, that may have ſo much intereſt as to take them up, and leave no room for antient Friends. It may be they have met with thoſe that are *more ſuitable*, or

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can be *more uſeful* to them: that have *more learning*, or wit, or *wealth*, or *power*, than *you* have, and therefore ſeem more worthy of their Friendſhip.

10. And ſome of them may think when you are in a *low* and *ſuffering ſtate*, and in *danger* of *worſe*, that it is part of their *duty of ſelf-preſervation* to be ſtrange to you (though in heart they wiſh you well.) They will think they are *not bound* to hazard themſelves upon the diſpleaſure of ſuperiours, to own or befriend you or any other: Though they muſt not deſert Chriſt, they think they may deſert a *man* for their own preſervation.

To avoid both extreams in ſuch a caſe, men muſt both ſtudy to underſtand which way is moſt ſerviceable to Chriſt, and to his Church, and withal to be able to deny themſelves, and alſo muſt ſtudy to underſtand what Chriſt meaneth in his final ſentence [*In as much as you did it (or did it not) to one of the leaſt of theſe my Brethren, you did it (or did it not (to me.*] As if it were to viſit the *Contagious*, we muſt neither caſt away our lives to *do no good*, or for that which in *value* holdeth no proportion with them; nor yet muſt we deny to run any hazard when it is *in-*

deed

deed our duty: So is it in our viſiting thoſe that ſuffer for the cauſe of Chriſt: (but that here the *owning them* being the *confeſſing of him*, we need more ſeldom to fear being too forward.)

11. And ſome of your friends may cover their faithfulneſs with the pretence of *ſome fault* that you have been guilty of, ſome *errour* that you hold, or ſome *unhanſom* or *culpable* act that you have done, or ſome *duty* that you have *left undone* or *failed* in. For they think there is not a better ſhelter for their *unfaithfulneſs*, then to pretend for it the *Name* and *Cauſe of God*, and ſo to make a *duty* of their *ſin*. Who would not juſtifie them, if they can but prove, that *God requireth them*, and *Religion* obligeth them to forſake you for your faults? There are few crimes in the world that by ſome are not fathered on God (that moſt hateth them) as thinking no name can ſo much honour them. Falſe friends therefore uſe this means as well as other Hypocrites: And though *God is Love*, and condemneth nothing more than *uncharitableneſs* & *malice*, yet *theſe* are commonly by falſhearted Hypocrites, called by pious vertuous names, and God himſelf is entitled to them: ſo